The Indian Church Commentaries

Edited under the general supervision
of the Bishops of Lahore & Rangoon

GENERAL EDITOR

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Cambridge Brotherhood, Delhi

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The Indian Church Commentaries

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BY THE RT. REV.
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GENERAL PREFACE

BY THE

BISHOP OF LAHORE

A FEW words of introduction are necessary to explain the general purpose of this series of Commentaries. The work was commenced under the general supervision of the Bishop of Rangoon and myself, acting as a Committee appointed in accordance with a Resolution of the Synod of Indian Bishops which met in 1900 Subsequently, with the sanction of the Metropolitan, the Rev. C. F. Andrews, of the Cambridge Brotherhood, Delhi, was appointed General Editor. The work of revision before publication is being left mainly in his hands, but a general Episcopal supervision of the work will still be maintained.

It is hoped that these Commentaries, while presenting a direct and scholarly interpretation of the New Testament, based upon the work of the great English Commentators, will, at the same time, contain such references to Eastern religious thought and life as may make them serviceable to both Christian and non-Christian. The series will, in due course, if funds permit, be translated into the leading Indian Vernaculars. It is

inevitable that in the interpretation of the New Testament there will be differences of opinion, and it has seemed best to allow these differences to appear in the series rather than to aim at a colourless uniformity. The final responsibility for the views taken of particular passages will rest with the individual contributors.

The thanks of the Synod Committee are given to the Editors of the Cambridge Bible for Colleges and Schools for their kind permission to quote freely from that Series, and also to the Cambridge University Press and the Delegates of the Oxford University Press for a similar permission to use the text of the English Revised Version in this volume.

G. A. LAHORE.

BISHOPSBOURNE,
LAHORE.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE purpose of this series of Commentaries is to place at the disposal of the Church in India the results of the labours of scholars in a form which shall be at once easily accessible and, as far as possible, acceptable to those for whom it is intended. This Commentary does not, therefore, lay any claim to original research or thought, except in so far as the selection of the materials and the weaving of them into a connected whole, and the attempt to apply them to the needs of the Indian Church are original.

It remains, therefore, to acknowledge the sources from which help has been derived. The foundation was some unpublished lectures and studies in Revelation by my father, the Rev. C. H. Waller, D.D. The guide first consulted in every difficulty and almost for every verse was Dr. Swete's 'Commentary on Revelation.' For the local picture Ramsay's 'Seven Churches' was invaluable. Other works consulted were, Milligan in the Expositor series, Trench's 'Epistles to the Seven Churches,' Alford, and the Cambridge Bible.

I have to acknowledge with deep thankfulness the unwearied help and counsel of the Rev. C. F. Andrews of Delhi, without whose aid this Commentary would never have seen the light. Many of the notes are his

and to him the larger share of any credit is due for whatever service to the Church by God's blessing results from its compilation.

It is our earnest prayer that it may be the means of inspiring some love of Christ and of the brethren, some patience and faith in trial and tribulation in the hearts of the Christians of India; and that it may also be a help to some, who have not yet enlisted in the Church of Christ, in understanding the meaning of the eternal truths revealed in the Book of Revelation.

E. H. M. WALLER.

BENARES, *March, 1908.*

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CHAPTER 1.

REVELATION.

The word "Revelation" or "Apocalypse" means *unveiling*. It is used to signify the unveiling of something which has previously been hidden. The word is appropriate to the contents of this book, for here the veil is lifted, in order that visions of God and of His Kingdom may be seen; and also the veil is lifted which hides from man God's purposes, and His people thereby receive comfort and guidance.

OTHER APOCALYPTIC WRITINGS.

The name Apocalypse has been given to those visions, in which the Seer is carried away in spirit and shown sights which symbolize future and present events. Such visions were vouchsafed to many of the Old Testament prophets, e.g., Micaiah and Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. But the most famous of all these are the visions of Daniel (vii.-xii.): and many points of contact are to be found between the visions of Daniel and of St. John.

There were also a number of Apocalyptic writings current among the Jews at the time of St. John, which were written after the Return from captivity. They are not reckoned as inspired, and have not found a place in Scripture, but they have furnished some of the symbolism of the Revelation. The most famous of these writings is the Book of Enoch, which is quoted in the Epistle of St. Jude (verse 14). (For more on this subject see Symbolism, Chapter xi.)

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING.

The Revelation was written from Patmos (i. 9), an island in the Ægean Sea, lying to the south of Samos. St. John had probably been sent there, as a criminal, to work in the quarries, a common punishment in those days. The tradition is that this banishment occurred in the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96) and the early Christian writers assert that the Revelation was written at that time.

In later times it has been maintained from the similarity of the events described in chapters xiii. and xvii. to the times of Nero, that the book was written during his reign (A.D. 54-68); but though the considerations for this earlier date have been strongly urged, no external evidence such as exists for the later date has yet been discovered, and the internal evidence of the first three chapters points to a condition of Church life much later than that of the Pauline Epistles. Though the question is by no means settled, the reign of Domitian is more probable than the reign of Nero.

AUTHORSHIP.

The writer of the Revelation calls himself "John" three times in the first chapter (verses 1, 4 and 9) and in xxii. 8. Early writers ascribe the book to John the Apostle; and no doubt would have been entertained that the writer was the Apostle, and not "John the Elder," or some other John, but for two circumstances:—(i) the Millennial controversy; (ii) the difference in style between the Revelation and the Gospel and Epistles of St. John.

i. In the early Church a controversy arose concerning the thousand years' reign of Christ (see notes on xx. 1-6) and in the course of this controversy doubts were thrown by some writers on the Apostolic authorship of the Revelation, to which those who held the doctrine of the Millennium appealed for support. But we find no such doubts put forward by writers of any weight until the third century, whereas the testimony to the Apostolic authorship dates from Justin Martyr in the second century.

ii. The difficulty as regards the different language and style in which the Revelation is written is not easily solved. The Gospel is written in the idiomatic Greek of the time. The Greek of the Revelation is much more irregular and Hebraic in style, often transgressing common grammatical laws. The question is raised, whether John the Apostle would have written two works, one in the ordinary correct Greek of his day and the other in this very irregular style. But the Apocalypse was written at Patmos, where St. John was probably alone, without a copyist or interpreter; the Gospel in the midst of his disciples at Ephesus (St. John xxi. 24 "we know"); and there

must be a great difference between a treatise elaborated for teaching and the record of a vision full of Old Testament symbolism and description. Turning from style to subject-matter, we find that the thoughts underlying both books seem to have more in common than they have divergencies, though the latter are also important. We have, for instance, the same grand view of God's purposes stretching from eternity to eternity; we have the ceaseless activity of the Word::of God and His final triumph; we have the 'glory' of Christ and His Church—the glory of suffering; we have the great conflict between light and darkness depicted in both Gospel and Revelation. On the other hand the teaching of the Fatherhood of God and the sonship of man in Christ, prominent in the Gospel and Epistles, is not emphasized in the Revelation, where God is rather the Creator and the Ruler of the world. Whatever may be the final solution of the question of authorship, the Church has witnessed from very early times that this is part of the Word of God delivered to her to keep, and this testimony finds a response in the heart of the Christian who reads.

CHAPTER II.

ASIA.

The Revelation was written primarily for the instruction of the Churches in Asia, and if we would understand its teaching, it is necessary to know something of the history of the country in which these Churches were situated, whose condition has constituted an example of Christian corporate life to future

The name of Asia is here applied only to the Western portion of Asia Minor, which had been the meeting place and battle ground of Asia and Europe. It was here that the famous Trojan War took place, the story of which was the delight of all the Greeks, just as the story of the Ramayana or Mahabharata is of the Indians. This is, however, more or less legendary. We are on firmer ground when we speak of the colonization of this part of Asia by Ionian Greeks, about a thousand years before Christ. Some of the cities whose Churches were addressed in the Revelation, date from about this time. Ephesus

and Smyrna both owe their foundation to early Greek colonists. Sardis was from the earliest times the capital of Lydia, the Oriental kingdom, regarded by these Greek settlers as their natural rival and foe. It was in this Ionian district that Thales of Miletus, the first Greek philosopher flourished. He was succeeded by others of the Ionian school, not less famous.

When we pass on to the sixth century before Christ, we find the Asiatic kingdom of Lydia, with its capital Sardis, coming into conflict with the Greeks, and finally subduing them under Crœsus, the famous wealthy king of Lydia (560-546 B.C.). But his dominion was not to continue; and in 546 B.C. his capital fell into the hands of Cyrus, famous alike as the founder of the Persian Empire and as the deliverer of the Jews from captivity. The result was that the cities of the Greeks came under the Persian yoke. This they endured for half a century, and then the Ionian cities, aided by the Athenians, revolted. They captured and burned Sardis, the capital, but were not strong enough to withstand the whole might of the Persian Empire, and the Greeks were entirely subdued by the generals of Darius, the same king in whose reign the Jewish Temple was completed (Ezra v. vi. Haggai. Zechariah). Then began the great contest between Persians and Greeks in which the Greeks, victorious at Marathon and Platæa, were finally freed from the Persian yoke.

From this time the history of the Greek cities in Asia is not important, until we come to the successors of Alexander the Great. Of these only two were able to hold sway over any large portions of Asia; Seleucus, who ruled over Asia Minor and most of the East, but was not able to hand on his empire intact to his successors; and Antiochus the Great, who in 223 B.C. ascended the throne and proceeded to extend his conquests over Asia Minor and Parthia. When he invaded Europe, however, he came into conflict with the Romans, who defeated him entirely, and divided his dominions among their friends and allies, 'Asia' falling to Eumenes, King of Pergamum. For three hundred years therefore before the Revelation was written, Asia had been a kind of 'Native State' within the Roman Republic. It did not, however, come directly under Roman rule till 133 B.C. when Attalus bequeathed his kingdom to the Romans. The government was then entrusted to Roman officials, and the Province suffered greatly. It was one of the richest parts of the Roman dominions and was conse-

quently plundered unmercifully by the Governors who were sent to rule it. When the Empire was established, under Augustus, after the battle of Actium in 31 B.C. the Asiatics found a welcome relief from robbery and oppression under a settled Imperial government, and their enthusiasm and zeal for the new Empire found extravagant expression in the worship of the Emperor, who was the symbol to them of peace and good rule.

The worship of the Emperor originated among the Asiatics themselves, and was not at first encouraged by the Romans. Later, however, the Romans perceived its advantages to their own supremacy and adopted the policy of subsidising it. This, as we shall see later, is the historical aspect of the Beast from the Sea in Rev. xiii. Wherever opportunity offered they combined the new Emperor cult with the worship of the local deity, revived the old decaying ritual, gave grants of money to the temples and encouraged religious festivals in honour of the new Emperor-god. The priests who had begun to find their occupation declining on account of the increasing unbelief of the upper classes, eagerly embraced an opportunity of re-instating themselves and their temples, and went to any length in their adoration of the Roman power and the Emperor-god, whose image they placed side by side with the image of the old deity, or identified with it. This is the historical aspect of the Beast from the Earth.

The Christian Church was therefore confronted with an unholy alliance of Religion and State against Christ. The old peace and tolerance which Christians had enjoyed along with other religions was now denied them. They were called upon to commit idolatry by worshipping the image of the Emperor, and they had to bear witness even unto death. The social dislike of the Christians, which had before been kept in check by the Roman religious neutrality, now found a vent, and Christians were dragged before the magistrates as traitors to the Roman Empire. Envy, hatred and malice were brought to bear to crush the new religion, which preached moral purity and abstention from idolatry in the midst of cities filled with idol worship and moral license. We have presented to us in the Revelation, in sharp contrast, the two ideals of the time; on the one hand the unity and purity of the Church, the Kingdom of Heaven; and on the other the world dominion, the kingdom of Satan, based on self-interest and warring to the death against the truth. To encourage Christians to

remain firm in the true Kingdom, and to assure them of the ultimate victory of Christ over the world power and its false religion, is the object of the Apostle. Christ rules the world. The Church, His Body, can never be overcome by the gates of hell. or by the utmost endeavours of Satan, Antichrist, the false Prophet, or their world-city Babylon.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

B.C.	
1100?	Colonization of Ephesus.
1000?	Colonization of Smyrna.
640	Birth of Thales of Miletus.
560-46	Crœsus, King of Sardis.
546	Cyrus conquers Sardis.
500	Ionians revolt against Persia.
490	Darius defeated by the Greeks at Marathon.
480	Xerxes invades Greece; defeated at Salamis and Platea.
336	Alexander the Great becomes King of Macedonia.
333-327	Defeats Darius at Issus and Arbela and Porus in India.
281	Seleucus predominant in Asia.
191	Antiochus defeated by the Romans.
138	Attalus, founder of Philadelphia, bequeathes his kingdom to the Romans.
27	Augustus, Emperor of Rome.
A.D.	
17	Great earthquake destroys Sardis and Philadelphia.
37	Caligula, Emperor.
41	Claudius, Emperor.
53?	St. Paul visits Ephesus.
54	Nero, Emperor.
56?	St. Paul leaves Ephesus.
64	Fire at Rome. Nero begins to persecute the Christians.
68	Death of Nero.
	Interregnum. Galba assumes power.
69	Otho and Vitellius successively assume Imperial power.
70	Vespasian, Emperor.

71 Destruction of Jerusalem.
79 Titus, Emperor.
81 Domitian, Emperor.
96 Death of Domitian.

CHAPTER III.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

The Book of Revelation, while undoubtedly addressed to the whole Church of Christ, was, in the first instance, sent to seven Churches in Asia. These Churches seem to have been recognized as centres of Christian influence, from which all Asia might be evangelized. They also seem to have been the points on the highroad, from which a circular letter might be distributed in the mofussal. Apart from such reasons it seems difficult to account for the omission of some important Churches, e.g., Magnesia and Tralles. The seven mentioned in Revelation, are Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Of these the most famous, both from its position as a centre of trade and from the fact that it was the first city in which a Roman Governor would land, was Ephesus. It boasted magnificent buildings, the temple of Artemis and the Theatre, and it was the centre to which Asia flocked for pagan worship as well as the centre from which Christianity reached the whole Province. St. Paul resided there for some years; and while he was there we know that Colosse and Hierapolis and Laodicea were evangelized, though it does not seem that he himself visited these places (Acts xix. 10; Col. ii. 1). There is now no city and no church at Ephesus. Smyrna was a very important city in the time of St. Paul. To-day it is the chief port in Asia Minor with a flourishing Christian community. Pergamum was the seat of the Roman government and is called 'Satan's seat' (Rev. ii. 13). It had given a martyr for the faith, Antipas, but on the other hand it contained some false Christians, called Nicolaitans, who are severely condemned. The city remains, and there is still a small Christian community. Thyatira was a well known commercial centre, its purple dyers being famous

(Acts xvi. 14) and it possessed also a guild of bronze workers. We know very little of it apart from what is told us in the Revelation, viz., that a sect of Nicolaitans was established there. The Church has survived to this day. Sardis was the old capital of the kingdom of Lydia. The inhabitants of this part of the Province were notorious for their luxury and dissoluteness, which seem also to have infected the Church, for it is spoken of as dead. The town has not survived. Philadelphia, though also in Lydia, seems to have escaped this moral corruption, for there is nothing but praise awarded to it. It is even now the seat of a Bishop and has a small community of Christians. Laodicea is mentioned in Col. ii. 1, and was known to St. Paul, for he wrote a letter to its inhabitants (Col. iv. 16), though he had not visited it at the time. It was a very wealthy city, and though twice destroyed by earthquake, rose again from its ruins. But so much is a worldly and careless spirit associated with this Church that the adjective "Laodicean" has passed into the English language in this sense. Only ruins of it now remain.

We see then that the seven Churches were actual living Churches. A full account of each will be found in the notes. We may here notice some of the contrasts which they present; for they show the characters which Churches throughout the world are likely to assume. These contrasts are well set forth by Trench. "A Church face to face with death (Smyrna), and a Church at ease (Sardis) settling down upon its lees; a Church with abundant means and a loud profession, yet doing nothing for the furtherance of truth (Laodicea), and a Church with little strength and small opportunity, yet accomplishing a mighty work for Christ (Philadelphia); a Church intolerant of doctrinal error, yet too much lacking that love towards its Lord for which nothing else is a substitute (Ephesus); and over against this, a Church not careful or zealous, as it ought to be, for doctrinal purity, but diligent in works and ministries of love (Thyatira)." Everywhere such types of Churches are to be found. But though some have tried to show that the seven Churches display the history of the whole Church from the day of Pentecost to Christ's coming, they have not succeeded in establishing their case. Nevertheless we may perhaps understand from the order of the Epistles the stages of development which Churches are likely from time to time to pass through. Thus Ephesus may typify that first love which accompanies the

founding of a Church, but after a time waxes cold. If persecution follows, as in Smyrna, the very trouble rouses the Church and enthusiasm returns. But when persecution ceases, laxity of doctrine and practice takes place, as in Pergamum, which 'has' those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Such laxity of doctrine if not checked will surely spread and Thyatira 'suffers' those who teach this false doctrine. The result must be spiritual death and Sardis is dead. Life, if it is given after such deadness, must show itself in effort and work for the spread of the gospel, and Philadelphia, though weak, is entering in at the open door of opportunity. After a great outburst of enthusiasm, a Church is very likely to retain the machinery of work but to lose the living spirit: Laodicea while claiming to be rich and to have need of nothing is in reality in beggary and want.

We see therefore that we may learn something of the life of a Church or of an individual from the order of the epistles, but it will hardly be possible to lay down a rigid sequence for the development of a Church. To the young Churches of India the whole subject must be one of deep interest; for, what was the experience of Asia in the first century, and especially of an Asia which had been moulded by contact with Europe, is very likely to be the experience of Asia in the twentieth century.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MEETING OF EAST AND WEST IN ASIA.

The problem and its solution.

In the province of Asia was presented in the first centuries of the Christian era the very problem which is engrossing the attention of the world to-day. While Roman political leaders attempted one solution and failed, it was left to the Christian Church to propose and work out the true answer.

There were in Asia at least four different elements which needed unification: Asiatics (Anatolians) who had a glorious past to look back upon, when their kings ruled over Asia; Greeks, inhabitants of the ancient Ionian cities and of the newer colonies planted by the Greek successors of Alexander

the Great, in order to Europeanize Asia Minor; Jews who had settled for trade and brought with them their strong Semitic instincts and customs; and lastly, there were the Romans, who had lately come from the far West, and who, while governing the country in accordance with Roman law and administration, granted such religious and commercial liberty as was consistent with their own dominion.

Naturally these four diverse elements did not settle down without a certain amount of friction. The Asiatics did not understand the Greek want of seriousness and their versatility. The Asiatics were in the eyes of the Greeks "barbarians" whom they thoroughly despised. The Jews, themselves an Oriental race, were more in sympathy with the Asiatics. They were more highly educated than the Greeks and at least as clever in trade. But their religion in many ways prevented them from gaining a commanding position. Before the Romans took possession of the country these three elements had been for some time associated together with the following results:—The Greeks were a clever race and zealous for education. But they had lost the originality and earnestness which characterized their earlier literature, and they were now little more than intellectual imitators, who lacked the depth and the morality of what they copied. The Jews were a great contrast to the Greeks in their adherence to their Law, and contempt for forms of idolatry. It was natural that Jew and Greek should enter into keen competition in trade and education. The indigenous population was exploited by each side. As is always the case when conflicting elements are brought together, an immense stimulus was given to the life of the whole community. The country prospered in the keen competition; riches poured in; stately buildings were reared, and travel and commerce were extended. The Asiatic spirit modified the European, and the European modified the Asiatic, and the result was neither wholly European nor wholly Asiatic, but a blend of both. The Romans brought their own western impress of law and order but were always a tiny minority in the country.

By considering the epistles of St. Paul and others we can understand what was the atmosphere of thought and life of the times. Intellectual activity, largely wasted on trivialities; philosophic speculation, but not of a high order; looseness of morality, which was a real danger, even in the Christian

Church; a disposition to compromise the truth in religious matters; restlessness and self-conceit, but a not unhealthy ambition.

Religiously the attempt was being made to combine in an eclectic system the teachings of Greek, Jew and Asiatic. The Colossians were warned by St. Paul against a false philosophy, which seems to have been a combination of the different religions of the country. The Nicolaitans probably attempted a compromise of a similar kind with disastrous moral consequences. It is a matter of history that no eclectic system or compromise between two religions has ever become permanent or established a hold on the masses of ignorant people, who are the majority of the population of every land. We see the same effect of eclecticism in India to-day, the various systems attempting to form new religious compromises and each of them failing in turn.

Politically the diversity of the races resulted in a rivalry of cities. The Greek ideal of patriotism was centred round a city and all the Greek cities of Asia were striving among themselves for the pre-eminence. When the Romans took over the country, they allowed the cities to retain their special privileges and by alternately favouring and depressing them, succeeded in keeping up a permanent rivalry. In the days when the Revelation was written, the Empire had become firmly established and the people hailed the reign of the Emperors as a relief from the tyranny of the old Roman Republican Government, whose only thought had been to make money. The change was similar to that which took place when Governors-General were appointed in India in place of the old Trading Company. The Roman law and administration gradually became paramount and crushed out much of the former civic activity.

Before the Apocalypse was written St. Paul had already grasped the only true solution of the problem of the unity of divergent races in Asia. He saw that there could be no such unity except by a change from within and a higher religious impulse. The religion of Emperor-worship was after all only a sham religion, and all other expedients for union—education, commerce and political combination—were based on self-interest, and no real union can exist on such a basis. In the Epistle to the Ephesians St. Paul sets forth the Church of Christ as not only an ideal union to be talked about, but a most practical union to find expression in life. In this Church

the Greek, Jew, Asiatic and Roman had already found a common ground and united in a common faith. The Revelation takes up this teaching and sets over against the Empire and its false unity the Kingdom of God. This "Kingdom or Church is seen in many lights and under many figures, but it always stands out in bright contrast to the sordid and worldly self-interest and false religiousness of the Kingdom of the Beast."

From the worldly point of view the Apostles were before their time. What they saw in the first century was in Roman eyes disloyalty, and in Greek eyes folly. But by the fourth century the truth preached by St. Paul and St. John had become clear even to the Emperor himself, and Constantine established in Asia Minor a Christian Empire.

Viewed from this standpoint, the Revelation has an absorbing interest for us in India, who are confronted with the same problem of the meeting of the East and West, and who can observe in our midst every one of the conflicting elements mentioned above, and can see before our eyes the true and the false principles of unity being tried. We too, who believe that India can only be united by the Christian Church, are ahead of our generation and are liable to be counted fools for Christ's sake; but as St. Paul and St. John were proved to be right in the end, so shall we too if we follow faithfully in their footsteps.

One can conceive no more noble ambition and no more inspiring ideal than to unify the discordant elements in one's own motherland, and to unify them on the principle which has never failed in the world yet, and which God has Himself revealed. If Greek and Jew and Asiatic and Roman could unite in the one Christian Body in the first century, what can prevent Hindu and Musalman, philosopher and peasant, English and Indian, being united by the same force and in the same glorious Body in the twentieth century? The message of the Revelation is therefore a living message to India; its importance can hardly be exaggerated, and in the next section some of the lessons will be discussed which the Asia of the first century has to teach the Asia of the twentieth.

CHAPTER V.

SOME LESSONS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION FOR THE INDIAN CHURCH.

Lesson of Union.—Undoubtedly the first lesson which the Revelation has for India to-day is the lesson of the true source of union. All the conflicting elements of the Asiatic churches are reproduced in India now. We have philosophy like that of the Greeks, we have idolatry and superstition like that of the Asiatics, we have pride and aloofness like that of the Jews, and we have the one central authority which combines in one dominion, but cannot unite in heart, all these conflicting elements. We see too the various expedients, which are resorted to, in order to produce a union based on self-interest. Education, commerce, political unity, all are in turn tried as the means of fusing the various elements. We see also the various attempts to form an eclectic religion, which shall combine the beauties of all the various beliefs and avoid the "offence" of each. New Hinduism, New Islam, Theosophy, Unitarianism and many other beliefs are in turn presented for our acceptance. The situation is unchanged, except in one particular which is most important. The presiding power does not adopt the means adopted by the Asiatic cities and accepted by the Romans in order to weld the Empire. On the contrary, the Government, under which the experiment of union of East and West is being tried, is a Government that is pledged to neutrality with regard to all religions and does not persecute.

The pictures of the Church which are given us in the Book of Revelation are sufficiently inspiring, if we would do our duty as Christians and present to India the true and only means of that union, which we all desire, but seem to find so hard to realize. The great multitude, all united together in praising God for their redemption (chap. v), the countless multitude which no man can number out of every nation, united before the throne of God (vii), the Bride of Christ triumphing while the earthly kingdoms and unions of men are destroyed—these are pictures of the ideal Church which may well inspire us to effort and work, in order to bring to pass something of what St. John saw.

Lesson of Hope.—We may remember that the Church of those days was no stronger or purer than the Church of to-day, and that the task which was set before it was, humanly speaking, far more hopeless than the task which is set before us. For we have a great Christian Church throughout the world around us, and centuries of Christian experience and inspiration behind us, and they had none of these advantages; but St. John had faith to see the victory, and it came. If we follow his faith, we too shall see the victory, in an India won for Christ.

Lesson of Patience.—If the Church in these days has to suffer, so had the Church of the Revelation; and in this Book we see the Church witnessing in the face of opposition, even while the Gentiles tread down the outer court of the Temple of God; but though the power of the world destroys the witnesses (xi) they rise again. The Church flies to the wilderness from the face of the dragon (xii) but she is nourished there by God; the Antichrist slays her seed (xiii) but the 144,000 are on Mount Zion with the Lamb. If we need assurance of victory, in spite of overwhelming odds, we have it here.

Lesson of Practical Christian Life.—Once more, if we find many practical problems facing us now, which dim our vision, we find that the Churches of Asia too had their problems. There was the very practical problem, for instance of the Nicolaitans. How far may a Christian acquiesce in heathen rites and ceremonies? The Nicolaitans gave teaching on this point, which is condemned in the severest language by St. John. Again, are we threatened with a complete destruction of our work through the uncompromising hostility of our opponents? We are shown how the witnesses, who are slain and lie dead in the streets of the city, rise again and the people give glory to God. Once more, are we appalled at the world forces that are marshalled against us and the materialism that is spreading around us? We hear the cry go up, 'Babylon the Great is fallen, is fallen!'

Lesson of the Purpose of Suffering.—The true function of the Church to witness and to rule spiritually through suffering and sacrifice is shown forth in this Book. The blessings enjoyed by those who, though cast out from the citizenship of the world, are yet citizens of heaven, are dwelt upon with a wealth of detail and joy, which takes away gloom from the most

fainthearted and despondent Christians, and makes them realize that the very suffering and humiliation they endure will help to work out God's glorious consummation of the ages.

Lesson of the Means of Victory.—The book of Revelation emphasizes throughout the only true means of victory—faith and patience. The servant of the Lord must not strive; as Jesus Christ overcame, so His servants are to overcome. It is the faith and patience of the saints which overcomes Antichrist; and only those who have come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb rejoice before the throne of God. Twice we see the multitude victorious through suffering, and the Book closes with the picture of the City which has overcome, and with the last Beatitude "Blessed are they that *wash their robes* that they may have the right to come to the tree of life and may enter in by the gates into the city" (Rev. xxii. 14).

A Vision of Christ.—Above all, there is the personal Vision of Christ, who though now we see Him not, yet rules the earth. He walks up and down in the Church now, helping, warning, praising, blaming. He knows our works, He sees and shares our joy and our sorrow; He weighs our sin and our service; all are known to Him, and He is guiding and helping throughout; while Antichrist rages against His servants, He Himself stands by them and is able to bring victory out of seeming defeat; He bids us proclaim His Coming to all around us and pray for His Advent. 'Let him that heareth say Come. Even so, Come, Lord Jesus.'

CHAPTER VI.

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION.

There has been more controversy over the interpretation of the Book of Revelation than over any other book of the Bible. There are several schools of interpretation, of which the Historical and the Futurist are best known. Between these a fierce controversy has been waged and indeed still continues. As a result, many readers have given up the study of the book in despair.

The principles which should underlie the interpretation of prophecy should first be considered, and then it will be possible to apply them to this most difficult Book. The ordinary function of a prophet is to interpret current events in the light of God's dealings with man and of eternal truth. God may for His own purposes commission a prophet to deliver an exact prediction, foretelling some event which men when they see, may recognize as the working of God. But the ordinary function of a prophet is not so much direct prediction, as explanation of the eternal relations of God and man, and their application to particular events. In this connexion it is important to note that the histories of the Old Testament are included among the *prophetic* books. To understand a prophecy fully, it is necessary to consider carefully the particular state of things, which it was designed to meet, and the condition of those to whom it was first addressed. The prophecy will not be exhausted, but we shall have then a basis from which to work and afterwards we can apply the principles revealed to other times and similar conditions. It will be found on examination that most prophecies have an application to the events of the time when they were delivered, and a further application to later events, which bore a resemblance to these first conditions. In addition to these applications most prophecies have also a spiritual bearing, and we find that what has been seen to be true in earthly events is also true in the spiritual world. Thus, the prophecy of the birth of Emmanuel in Isaiah vii. was a sign of the continued presence of God with His faithful people during the time of Isaiah. It was far more plainly fulfilled when God Himself was born in the world, in the person of Jesus, and it is still true spiritually because He is with us to the end of the age by His Spirit, and lastly when He comes and gathers us to dwell with Him ('The tabernacle of God is with men,' Rev. xxi) it will be completely fulfilled.

Men are always anxious to look into the future and often ready to believe that God has mapped out every event and recorded it minutely in the pages of His revelations to men. From among those who hold this view has arisen the "Futurist" school of interpreters of the Revelation who hold that all the Revelation is still future and that the prophecies are practically only concerned with one short seven years which is the period they assign for the events from chapters vi-xix. They, as a rule, reject entirely the historical basis and project the whole

into the future. In opposition to them, there are others who interpret all as applying to past history only, and so rob the book of many of its lessons for our own time. Neither of these schools is wholly wrong, for the eternal principles of God know no time and they apply equally to past history or to future events. Our business must therefore be to try to discover those principles by studying their exhibition in past history, and we may then be able to apply them to our own times and to the future. As has been seen, the Revelation contains much teaching which is applicable to the conditions of India to-day, and we may receive not only guidance for our present difficulties, but knowledge of what God's dealings with His people will be in the future, and of what is the meaning of some of those predictions, in which all Christians express their belief when they say in the Creed, "He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and dead, whose Kingdom shall have no end."

The truest comfort in affliction is to understand the reason of the suffering, to realize the progress of which it is a necessary part, the end to which we are struggling, the character and purposes of Him, in whom we have put our trust and are confident that we shall not be ashamed. It is not always given to man to have this knowledge; the life of faith requires that we should sometimes suffer in the dark, as Job did; but it has been and still is the work of our Comforter to enlighten the eyes of our understanding. This is one main purpose of the Revelation.

There are many lines of thought running through the Scriptures: we shall see how these converge in its last book. God reveals Himself in many ways and we shall get a glimpse of some of them here. The Gospels relate Christ's First Coming and work on earth. He is still working in the world and we shall see traces of His footsteps throughout the Book of Revelation. He comes as the Faithful Witness, the First-born from the dead, the Prince of the Kings of the earth. He is working out His purpose in proof of His right to each title, and He is coming again at length in glory to judge both the quick and the dead and to establish His everlasting Kingdom. We approach this book then with the conviction that we shall be advanced a little further in the evolution of our knowledge and understanding of God's will. We hope to see more along the lines, which have been gradually unfolding themselves throughout the Scriptures, and to learn more of God's purposes for man revealed in Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VII.

ANALYSIS.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ is given to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass. It is conveyed in the form of a letter addressed to the seven Churches in Asia. Immediately after the greeting we are told of Christ's Coming and of the submission of His enemies. But the visions carry us far beyond the domestic affairs of the seven Churches, and direct our thoughts to the world-wide Coming and Kingdom of Christ. Whatever our view of the meaning of these events may be, we have in them the main subjects of our Book,—the Coming of Christ and His Kingdom: or, to state it in other words, the vision of Christ and the vision of His Church. Proceeding to a further examination of the Revelation, we find in the first chapter, after the preface (i. 1-3) and opening greeting (i. 4-8) a vision of Jesus Christ risen from the dead (i. 9-20). In the two following chapters we have the special messages sent to the seven Churches (ii. and iii.). This is the introductory portion of the book, which, as we have seen, is cast in an epistolary form. We then come to a series of visions and judgments, which recall the visions of Isaiah, Daniel and Zechariah. In the fourth chapter we have a vision of Heaven, recalling the description given in Isaiah vi. In the fifth chapter, we have the taking of the book by the Lamb and the thanksgiving of the whole creation, that One has been found worthy to open it. The series of the seven seals carries us on to the eighth chapter (verse 4). This section is broken by the visions of the twelve tribes (vii. 1-8) and of the multitude which no man could number (vii. 9-17). The seventh seal introduces the seven trumpets (viii. 2) and this series of trumpets continues until the end of the eleventh chapter. We have the narrative broken by the vision of the little book in chapter x., recalling the similar vision in Ezekiel ii., iii.; and by the story of the two witnesses in chapter xi. 1-14. The section ends with the proclamation of the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (xi. 15-19).

The twelfth and thirteenth chapters give us the visions of the Church, as the Woman clothed with the sun, and of the Beasts who arise to persecute her. The fourteenth chapter shows us the hundred and forty and four thousand redeemed

from the earth, and then come proclamations from heaven, followed by the appearance of the Son of Man, to reap the harvest of the earth. The fifteenth chapter takes us once more in vision to Heaven, and the preparations for the final judgment to be poured out by the seven angels upon the earth; this is fulfilled in the sixteenth chapter, which contains, at the seventh vial, the warning, Behold I come as a thief.

The seventeenth chapter is an episode consisting of the vision of the Great Harlot Babylon, the city which reigneth over the kings of the earth. Chapter xviii. narrates the fall of Babylon, and Chapter xix., in contrast, the Marriage of the Lamb and the Victory of the Word of God, who destroys the Beasts that oppress His Church. The twentieth chapter opens with the reign of Christ and ends with the Judgment delivered from the great white Throne.

The last vision is that of the New Heaven and the New Earth whose central City is the New Jerusalem (xxi.—xxii. 5).

The final exhortations and blessings end the book (xxii. 6-21).

The visions as above enumerated are clearly marked, and, considered separately, not always difficult to understand. It is when we come to group them that the difficulty arises. Setting aside the first three chapters, which all agree to be introductory, we have the section from chapter iv. to xi., beginning with the vision of Heaven and ending with the proclamation of the Kingdom. In this part Christ appears in two capacities, as the High Priest, who has suffered death, and as the King, who controls the destinies of the world.

The next part begins with the vision of the Church opposed by the usurping kingship and the false priesthood of Antichrist. The opposition of the world grows in intensity, till we have the picture of Great Babylon in xvii., the city and kingdom of the Beast who is described in xiii. But as the opposition is seen increasing in its successive stages, so the triumph is exhibited in clearly marked stages also. The persecution of the Church by Satan and his emissaries in chapter xii. and xiii. results in the complete vindication of the saints in xiv., and the final triumph is described in the appearance of the Son of Man to reap the harvest and to tread the winepress. The judgment is again taken up and recounted in the series of bowls (chap. xvi.) but the opposition also grows in intensity and becomes open war against the Son of Man. The answer is the destruction of Babylon which is predicted at

the end of the chapter. But the mention of Babylon leads to a fuller description, and we see in xvii. the full power of Babylon and of the world kingdoms, which match themselves against God. Their destruction is accomplished in xviii. and xix., and the Bride, the Lamb's wife, appears (xix).

We note therefore three stages in the account of the Church's struggle with the Antichirst;—xiii., xiv. culminating in the harvest of the earth; xv., xvi. culminating in the seventh bowl and the judgment of Babylon; xvii.-xix. culminating in the Victory of the Word of God and the destruction of Babylon, the Beast and the False Prophet. The final opposition is crushed and the reign of peace and righteousness established (xx.-xxii.)

To tabulate the results of our analysis, we have;—

Chapter	i.	Introduction, and Vision of Christ Risen.
„	ii. & iii.	The Epistles to the Seven Churches.
	IV.-XI.	THE COMING OF CHRIST.
Chapter	iv.	Vision of the throne and dominion of God as seen by the Old Testament prophets.
„	v.	Vision of the Lamb taking the Book and the thanksgiving of creation.
„	vi.	Opening of six seals.
„	vii.	The servants of God on earth and in heaven.
„	viii. & ix.	The seventh seal and the first six trumpets.
„	x.	The little book.
„	xi.	The two witnesses an dthe last trumpet proclaiming the Kingdom of Christ.
	XII.-XXII. 5.	THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM.
Chapter	xii. & xiii.	The Church in trial and temptation opposed by Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet.
„	xiv.	The Church redeemed and the proclamation of the Gospel, ending in the harvest.
„	xv. & xvi.	The preparation and outpouring of the seven vials.
„	xvii. & xviii.	Great Babylon and its World Empire overthrown.
	xix.	The Bride of the Lamb and the Victory of the Word of God.

Chapter	xx.	The Kingdom of Christ and the Last Judgment.
„	xxi., xxii. 5.	The vision of the New Jerusalem.
„	xxii. 6-21.	Final exhortations and Blessing.

Note.—This two-fold division of the book is that proposed by Dr. Swete.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH.

As has already been stated, the Revelation gathers up many threads of teaching, which run through the whole Bible, and it would be impossible to detail all the points of contact with the earlier books. The main theme however stands out clearly—Christ and His Church, militant and triumphant.

(1) **Christ.**—Throughout the whole book it is not teaching about Christ that we hear, it is Christ Himself whom we see. The Revelation has been called the 'Gospel of the Glorified Lord.' We see Him in His activities and in His providence ruling and controlling the world and the Church. He is walking in the midst of the Churches, He holds the angels of the Churches, as stars, in His right hand, He sends messages to each Church and knows the works of each one. He it is who takes the book and unseals it, and receives the worship of all Creation. As He breaks every seal great events take place on earth, proving that though He is in heaven, He has not forsaken men, nor abandoned His rule over the world. He is proclaimed King of the world in chapter xi.: and in xii., He is the Man-child caught up to God and to His throne. He appears to reap the Harvest of the world (xiv.) and in chapter xix. He leads His armies to battle against the powers of evil. His Kingdom is established on earth (xx.) and He dwells with His Bride in the New Jerusalem. He is even now calling men to Himself (xxii. 16, 17).

Here then is no blind fate, controlling the destinies of men, but a Living Saviour and a King, who knows everything and disposes everything for the good of men. Nor is He an abstract Deity or ultimate Principle of philosophy, without attributes, but a Living Personal Incarnate Lord, raising the world from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the Kingdom of the Living God.

(2) **The Church.**—To appreciate the teaching about the Church, we should consider the state of the Church when the Revelation was written. It was the first century. The Roman Empire was still at the height of its power. Its metropolis, Rome, was famed for profligacy perhaps greater than the world has ever witnessed before or since. Religion had sunk to a low ebb. The wealthy were sceptical, the poor superstitious. The Jews, who should have kept the light of truth burning, were sunk in formalism and were a by-word throughout the civilized world for exclusiveness. The Church was poor and despised. Not many wise and not many mighty were called. Recruited largely from slaves and the lower classes of the people, Christians hardly attracted attention in the East, until they refused to burn incense before the statue of the Emperor, or to take part in some public heathen festival. For the most part they were classed with Jews and hated accordingly. If anyone had told the Romans that Christianity was to conquer the world: that in less than three centuries the Emperor was to be a Christian and Christianity the religion of the Empire, he would have been counted a madman. But it is the privilege of the Christian to receive the wider vision. St. Paul could recognize in a little company of poor and base born at Corinth the 'Body of Christ.' The Ephesians, in spite of their weakness and low morality were still to him "saints." In the Revelation we see this weak Church in her true light as a Kingdom and Priests. Here, in the Church, is the special sphere of Christ's work; at the outset we see Him walking in her midst. We see the great multitude of the redeemed rejoicing before the throne of God, even when the world puts forth its utmost cruelty and power. The Church flees into the wilderness, Antichrist persecutes her children, but the Lamb walks on Mount Zion with His chosen ones. Great Babylon, the Harlot, is drunk with the blood of the saints, but the Bride of the Lamb shares His triumph and the Holy City descends from Heaven. Everywhere we find the same features. Hope sustains us all through the most terrible persecutions, and at the last the Church, poor, despised and persecuted, shares the Kingdom of Christ as His Bride and rises to her glory as the New Jerusalem. 'If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.' The Revelation shows us how to see things as they really are, and teaches us what hope there is in our "end."

CHAPTER IX.

THE ANTICHRIST.

We have briefly noted some points in the teaching of the Revelation concerning Christ and His Church. It will be well to consider separately that spiritual power ever opposed to the will of God, whose special title in the New Testament is "Antichrist."

The word Antichrist only occurs in four places, all of them in the Epistles of St. John, viz.: 1 John ii. 18. "Little children, it is the last hour; and as ye heard that Antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour." 1 John ii. 22. "Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the Antichrist, even he that denieth the Father and the Son." 1 John iv. 3. "And every spirit which confesseth not Jesus, is not of God; and this is the spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already." 2 John 7. "For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the Antichrist."

The chief feature of the Antichrist in these passages is the denial of Jesus Christ's coming in the flesh. This was the characteristic of the earliest heresies which troubled the Church. The Docetics, for instance, held that Jesus was not God manifest in the flesh, but a man upon whom the Divine Spirit, Christ, descended at the Baptism leaving Him again before the humiliation of the Passion. They held that matter was essentially evil and that therefore God Himself could not be born or suffer except in appearance. The Incarnation and the Passion were "maya," illusion. These doctrines destroyed the whole moral foundation of Christianity. For the Christian Faith is based upon the sacrifice of God for men. Impurity and a compromise with idolatry gained ground, wherever this spirit of Antichrist prevailed, and the humility and suffering of Christ became meaningless and empty terms.

The second reference to the Antichristian spirit is found in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians (ii. 3-12). The passage is so important that it will be well to transcribe it at length. "Let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be except the falling away come first and the man of sin be revealed, the

son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. Remember ye not that when I was yet with you I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work; only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth; even he whose coming is according to the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error that they should believe a lie; that they all might be judged, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." We have here a new title, the "Man of Sin." And the title points certainly to the fact that St. Paul expected some person to arise, who would exhibit in a special degree the characteristics of the Antichrist. St. John recognizes many Antichrists in the followers of certain false doctrines, St. Paul looks forward to a single personal manifestation. We learn from St. Paul that there are certain principles at work, which are Antichristian, and that when these are fully developed, we may expect the appearance of some representative of those principles, who shall be in a special sense the Antichrist. These principles are described as (i) claims to deity, and (ii) the working of miracles by the power of Satan.

These two characteristics were abundantly manifested in the Roman Empire. The Emperors claimed divine honours, and to deny the truth of the claim was to commit an act of high treason, punishable by death. As regards the working of miracles, we have abundant evidence of the fascination of magic, both among the educated and uneducated, during the first century. This is a phenomenon which always accompanies the decay of ancient creeds. Philosophy had done its work in discrediting the old religious beliefs and customs, and had made the whole basis of religious life uncertain and vague. Men with spiritual cravings unsatisfied went to magic-workers and miracle-mongers, and tried to combine their teaching with an exalted esoteric philosophy. Something

similar to this has taken place in India during this time of transition. We have to-day the spectacle of Theosophy, taking on the one side a lofty philosophic tone and claiming to have discovered the essence of all true religion, and on the other side amusing its devotees with the magic of 'mahatmas.'

There is another important phrase in the passage quoted above—"the mystery of lawlessness." Mystery means in St. Paul's writings a religious principle, which has hitherto been hidden, but has now been made manifest. In contrast with 'the mystery of lawlessness,' St. Paul gives us the revelation of the 'mystery of godliness' (1 Tim. iii. 16). "Great is the mystery of godliness; He who was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory." We have here God's mystery. It is referred to in Rev. x. 7, and it is to be finished in the days of the seventh trumpet. Opposed to this we have the mystery of the Antichrist. The two work in opposition, but simultaneously. The mystery of God has its prophets and its converts, its faith and its triumphs, its trials and its temptations. The mystery of lawlessness too has its prophets (Rev. xiii. 11) and its converts; it gains the victory for a time, but in the end it will be destroyed at the zenith of its power.

This principle of the Antichrist setting up the world kingdoms against the Kingdom of Christ runs through Old Testament prophecy. We may refer to Isaiah xiv. 14; Ezek. xxviii. 6-10; Dan. vii. 25; viii. 9-12, 23-25. The fact that these passages relate in the first instance to different epochs and historical developments, confirms our view that we are to look for the spirit of Antichrist animating the world continuously, and on occasion manifesting itself in the rule of some great opponent of the truth. And if we may so interpret St. Paul, we are to expect that at the time of Christ's coming there will be manifested one who is pre-eminently the Antichrist.

In the Book of Revelation, the Antichrist, in one or other of his many forms, is constantly brought before us. Now he is the great Dragon ready to devour the Church, now he is the False Prophet performing lying wonders and commanding men to worship the Beast and his image. Locally in Asia Minor the reference is, as we have seen, to the Roman Empire in alliance with the corrupt priesthood, but the imagery used carries us far beyond this local reference. We are shown how all through the history of the Church, she is opposed by this same spirit of

worldly gain and false religious pride, which does not scruple to match itself with Christ and His Church. The kingdoms of the world are dominated by this spirit, and the good things of this life are only for its followers. We are told that no man may buy or sell, save he that has the mark of the Beast. The Church has to preserve her life in the midst of all the temptations which such a situation involves: but over and over again, in various visions and under various symbols, we are reminded that her true life is hid with Christ in God. Living as Christians of those early days did under a power which was professedly Anti-christian, it was well for them to receive the comfort of knowing that the kingdoms of this world would one day become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and that they are even now under His control; and it was well too that they should receive the warning not to palter with the spirit of the world, nor to attempt to buy present comfort with the sacrifice of principle.

The message of the Revelation never grows old. It is true in India to-day as it was in Asia in the first century. The Antichrist is still opposed to the Church of Christ. His weapons are the same, the weapons of worldly gain and false religious pride and caste prejudice. To be a Christian still means isolation and social exclusion. The world still offers all its advantages only to those who share its religion. Christians in India will derive an inspiration and an encouragement from the story of the early Church. We still have Christ among us, as they had, and it is the living presence of Christ in the Church, poor though she may be in numbers and wealth, despised by the world and discouraged by her trials, which is our only comfort as it is our only hope of success. But it is not merely hope and comfort that we derive from the study of the Revelation, we receive also the exhortation to work and pray for the Kingdom of Christ. The last command in the book is a Missionary command, 'Let him that heareth say Come.' The ideal of the Church presented in its pages and the promise of ultimate success encourage us to labour and to be faithful and patient; for we know that even though we die in the Lord our works will follow after us. We see what the Church really is; we understand her high destiny and the end to which God is working; and on the other hand, the veil under which the world hides its specious pretences is torn aside, and we see the dominion of Antichrist and the false religion of his prophet as they really are.

CHAPTER X.

THE COMING.

"He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." Although this sentence forms part of the oldest and most universal Creed of Christendom, the ideas which prevail as to the teaching of the Scriptures about the Coming are frequently exceedingly vague.

It will not be possible to consider in detail the teaching of the Old Testament; the Prophets distinctly foretell a Kingdom of Christ, a judgment of the disobedient, and a partnership of God's people in the Kingdom.

In the New Testament the parable of the tares (St. Matt. xiii. 24-30, 37-43) is the first distinct prophecy. "The harvest is the end of the world; the reapers are the angels." The tares are to be gathered out and cast into a furnace of fire; the righteous shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (See St. Matt. xvi. 27). In the last discourse which our Lord gave to His disciples before His death, He told them the signs of His Coming (St. Matt. xxiv, xxv). Tribulation is to precede it, as it did the destruction of Jerusalem. The two events, the end of the Jewish dispensation and the end of the world, are described in such close connexion that it is difficult to disentangle the two prophecies. The following events, however, seem clear. Great tribulation; the appearance of false Messiahs; the "sign of the Son of Man" in heaven; the Coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven, amid the mourning of all the tribes of the earth; the mission of the angels to gather the elect from the four winds of heaven; the unpreparedness of the world and the punishment of those who are not watching. In St. Matt. xxv. three scenes are presented to us. There are ten virgins waiting for the Coming of the Bridegroom. Five are ready and accepted, five are unready and rejected. In the second scene, a man returning from a far country calls his servants to account for the money with which he had entrusted them at his departure. Those who were faithful and diligent are rewarded with greater opportunities of service, the unfaithful servant is cast out into outer darkness. The last scene is the judgment of the nations. They are divided, as sheep and goats

are divided by a shepherd. Those who have exercised love and charity to those in distress inherit the Kingdom, and those who have not, are sent into an eternal chastisement. At His trial Jesus foretold His Coming in the clouds of heaven,—the last prophecy of the Coming recorded by St. Matthew.

St. Luke's Gospel emphasizes the unexpected nature of the Coming in many passages, especially in the seventeenth chapter (verses 20-37). This last passage contains one verse which requires separate notice. "The days will come when ye shall desire to see *one of the days of the Son of Man* and ye shall not see it." The phrase "day of the Son of Man" signifies His Coming. It would appear therefore that Christ, while He undoubtedly looked forward to one great day, which was to reveal the secrets of all hearts, also spoke of different "days of the Son of Man." Thus in His prophecy the destruction of Jerusalem may be regarded as "one of the days of the Son of Man," and we are thereby taught that from time to time a climax will be reached in the career of nations in their opposition to God. Then a judgment will fall which will be unmistakably recognized as a Coming of the Son of Man. In a sense therefore Christ is continually "coming."

In St. John this continual coming is spoken of as a "judgment of the world." In St. John xii. 31 we read "Now is a judgment of this world," i.e., one judgment out of many. The reference is primarily to the Passion, which was a most solemn judgment or revelation of the thoughts of the world; but the phrase seems to show that as the days of the Son of Man are many, so also are the judgments of the world.

To gather together the teaching of the Gospels, we learn that there is to be a time of tribulation, during which false Christs shall appear, and that from time to time relief will be granted in "the days of the Son of Man"; that while judgments are in one sense always going on, there will be a final Coming of the Son of Man, when the angels shall gather together the good to be rewarded and the evil to be punished; that those who are watching and ready will go in to the "marriage"; those who have used the gifts which God gave them will be rewarded; those who have exhibited in their lives a Christlike love, even though they do not appear to have been aware of the teaching of the Gospel, will inherit the Kingdom prepared for them, and those who have not shown such a spirit will be punished;

the Coming of Christ will be visible at length to all, and there will be a resurrection and a final judgment.

Little is told us in the Acts with regard to the Coming, though it was clearly an article of the first importance in Christian preaching (cp. Acts xvii. 31). It should be noted that all crude and earthly conceptions are rebuked by our Lord Himself and speculation as to the time of His Coming is expressly forbidden (Acts i. 7).

In 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52 we gain the additional knowledge that those who do not pass through the experience of death will nevertheless undergo a mysterious resurrection change at the time of the Coming of Christ. This receives further light from the First Epistle to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. iv. 14-18). There it is stated that the resurrection of the dead in Christ shall take place first at His Coming, and after that the taking up of the living to meet their Lord and remain with Him for ever. The Second Epistle was written to correct the false impression that the Coming and the Kingdom were immediately to appear (cp. also St. Luke xix. 11) From the first chapter we learn of a coming to judgment and of the rest from suffering which shall be given to those who have undergone persecution in this world. In the second chapter we are warned that the mystery of lawlessness must come to the full, before the Lord appears.

These passages, then, add to the outline given in the Gospels the following details. The times and seasons of the Coming of Christ are in God's hands and Christians must not speculate or be anxious. Iniquity must first reveal itself. When at length the Coming takes place, the dead in Christ are to rise first, then the living are to experience the resurrection change and to be united with their Lord.

These are in brief outline the events of the Coming as foretold in the rest of the New Testament. The Book of Revelation describes under symbols the teaching given. We shall there find every part of the New Testament picture expanded. The tribulation is described under different figures; the mystery of lawlessness is detailed (chap. xiii). The Comings of the Son of Man are plainly recounted in chapters xiv. and xix. and implied in xi. and xvi. The Kingdom of Christ is described in chapter xx. as enduring for 'a thousand years,' and the judgment is said to follow it (xx. 11-15). The new heaven and the new earth are fully described in xxi. and xxii.

There still remain many difficulties to be solved, and perhaps, till the events themselves proclaim the solution, our doubts will never be entirely satisfied.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE REVELATION.

Every religion and every language has its symbolism; in fact, symbolism is as much a language as words. We are familar with certain conventional symbols, which are understood without further explanation, and convey ideas, which could not otherwise be expressed without lengthy explanations. Christianity has a symbolism of its own. The heavenly Jerusalem, Mount Zion, the martyr's crown, are specimens of a conventional language, which is understood by all Christians. The Jewish symbolism was very varied and extended to many different objects. It is largely used in the Revelation and there can be no doubt that many of the pictures which seem strange to modern readers were perfectly familiar to the Jewish mind. Indeed the whole of the Revelation is filled with allusions to the Old Testament, and it is an unfailing canon of its interpretation that the meaning of any figure should first be sought in the Old Testament. It is true that we meet with some new symbols, which do not appear in the Old Testament, but the cases are rare indeed when there is not some hint to be found, even if the figure is at first sight wholly new.

To take some typical examples, the centre of Jewish worship was the Temple; it was the House of God, the abode of the Shekinah, the place of sacrifice, the repository of the covenant of God. This was the early Christian symbol of the Church (cp. 1 Peter ii. 5, etc.) Its furniture symbolizes different acts of worship within the Church: the parts of the building represent the different members of the Church. In the Book of Revelation the Temple symbolism is almost a language by itself. The pillars are faithful Christians, the altar and its incense are the prayers of the saints, the removal of the veil or purdah is the revelation of God's purpose in the Church, the golden candlestick represents the seven Churches in Asia, the measuring of the temple courts is the election and protection of God's people. Other symbols of the Church are found in

the Apocalypse, in the Twelve Tribes of Israel; in Jerusalem, the Holy City; in the Woman clothed with the sun; in the Bride adorned for her Husband.

The use of names is noteworthy. Balaam is the corrupter and tempter of God's people; Jezebel is the faithless leader, who teaches them to sacrifice to idols; David is always the name of royalty and majesty. Places again are symbolical. The Euphrates is the seat of the world-empires; Babylon is the world-city. Sodom and Egypt typify the place of the death of Our Lord and of His witnesses; Har-Magedon is the battle-field of God's people in their warfare against the world.

One feature of Revelation is that the contrast between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan is represented under various pictures. In this contrast symbol often answers symbol, e.g., the Lamb has seven horns signifying His perfect dominion, and Satan has seven heads and ten horns typifying his usurped dominion. He is joined by ten kings, while Christ is followed by His twelve apostles. Christ has His two witnesses, Satan has the Antichrist and the False Prophet, both of them kings and priests to their respective masters.

Not only do the Christian and the Antichristian kingdoms stand out in contrast, but not infrequently the earthly is answered by the heavenly. For instance, the light of the star in heaven is matched with the light of the candlestick on earth; the heavenly host of the redeemed with the suffering martyr Church on earth; Christ Himself in Heaven, the Living One who was dead, with the Church on earth which shares both His death and resurrection.

Perhaps the most important class of symbols in the book, however, is that of the numbers. St. John's use of numbers is very careful and systematic. Seven is by far the most common and signifies completeness. The seven Churches typify the whole Church, the seven horns of the Lamb His complete dominion, the seven Spirits the completeness of the Holy Spirit's power. Twelve is the number of the organized Church. We have the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles, the twice twelve elders round the throne of God, the twelve times twelve thousand of the Church's first fruits, the twelve foundations and gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, whose very walls are also multiples of twelve. The number four is the symbol of creation; we have the four living creatures, representative of creation, uttering the four-fold ascription of praise. Ten seems

to signify either the organized power of the world, e.g., ten horns and ten kings of Antichrist; or a time of worldly dominion, e.g., the ten days of persecution, and the thousand ($10 \times 10 \times 10$) years of the reign of Christ on earth. The only other number which needs to be noticed is the period of the Church's hour of trial and suffering, which is variously expressed as 1,260 days, $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, 42 months. This seems to be a figurative expression for the half of seven years and to represent a time cut short by the mercy of God (cp. St. Matt. xxiv. 22 "for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.")

Of symbols which do not readily fall under any class, we may notice the use of horns for power: eyes for the Spirit; sealing on the forehead for preservation and enrolment; measuring for protection. Animals and plants are used as symbols, but no great difficulty is presented by their use as their general purport is readily intelligible to the readers. If any of the Revelation symbolism is strange to us, it is because we do not use the Old Testament as it was used in the first century. The Old Testament is in most cases our clue, and, in the interpretation offered in the notes, this is the line which has been followed.

It may be well to explain briefly the narrative of the Revelation paraphrasing the symbols as much as possible. After the prefatory announcement of the purpose of the book and the greeting to the seven Churches, the Apostle shows us the triumphant Christ, still a son of man, but glorified and watching over and caring for His people. He has triumphed over death and is for ever the Guardian of the Church. That Church has to witness for Him and a great struggle is approaching. Warnings are conveyed concerning the impending struggle with the world and with Satan, and each Church is shown its weakness and its strength. A promise is added of the blessing of continued endurance. Before the struggle begins we first of all see the holiness and dominion of God. He rules over all the world by right of Creation and men and creatures are ever praising and serving Him. The purpose of this vision is to show men that though in the world the power of God may for a time be defied, yet He is really the Ruler of all things. Then we see the vision of Redemption. Christ is on the throne of the Kingdom which He has won by His humiliation and death. He still bears the marks of His Passion and He is still in the form of His humility, but He is the Ruler of

God's people and is about to conquer the world of evil. He alone has power to unfold God's purposes and to guide the course of human history. This He proceeds to do and we see something of what those purposes are. We see first the victorious power of the Gospel of Christ, which is to go throughout the whole world conquering and to conquer. But its course will not be wholly peaceful. War must follow and famine and pestilence and the other judgments of God. These judgments will grow more and more terrible as the earth is seen to be more and more reckless in its opposition to Christ. But what of the Church itself? Must it suffer because it is in the world, or will the judgments which fall on the enemies pass by the followers of Christ? The answer is given in the seventh chapter and we see the Church coming through much tribulation, yet preserved on earth by the care of God and triumphing with Christ in heaven. Then the judgments, increasing in intensity, fall on the earth, but they do not yet bring utter destruction. God would have sinners to repent and so the judgments are in the form of warnings which may turn men from their evil ways and cause them to serve Him. But men refuse to repent, and we see that the time of waiting is about to be cut short. Yet still the mercy of God is displayed and God's servants are sent to prophesy before kings and peoples and nations, in order that they may turn to Him. The result is seen in the martyrdom of the witnesses and the apparent triumph of the power of the world. But the triumph is short lived. The humiliation of the witnesses and their suffering is exactly parallel to the humiliation and suffering of Christ, for they rise again from the dead even as Christ rose.

We now witness the great conflict between the Church and the world. We first of all see the Church in glory, but at the same time suffering pangs, owing to the temptations and opposition of Satan, which increase in intensity at the time of the birth of Christ. Christ is born and ascends to heaven and sits at the right hand of God. Satan finds that the death of Christ has so limited his power against men that he must make the most of his opportunities on earth, if he is to save anything of his dominion, and accordingly he persecutes the Church and the servants of God to such an extent that the earth itself is weary of the continual flood of wickedness and rises against it. Satan then organizes his forces against the

Church. These forces are a kingship, which claims divine powers and worship and aims at setting up a world dominion, and a religion, which is used to promote the false worship of the world, and banishes from its society those who refuse to worship. Active resistance to this power is useless and there is nothing left for the Church but to suffer and to conquer by means of patience and faith. The Church meanwhile is comforted by the continual presence of Christ even while the persecution is going on all around. She shares in the service and praise of heaven, spiritually, even while yet on earth. The Gospel must still be preached to the world, and men must be called from the idolatry of Satan's kingdom to the worship of God. The city and dominion of the world cannot endure; already their doom is pronounced and the Church must keep herself separate. She must not be dismayed by sufferings, for those who die in the cause are truly blessed and their works shall not be lost but shall remain. This is illustrated by the account of the end, when Christ shall come and shall reward every man according to his work, giving to the faithful their reward and punishing the wicked.

The doom of the world has been pronounced, but it has not yet come. We see the preparations being made for it. It is emphasized as an exhibition of the righteousness of God and in witness thereof we see the Church giving thanks to God for His righteous acts. Then the judgments of God fall on the false dominion and they are final and complete. There is one last muster of the forces of the world against Christ and the Church, but it is of no avail. The power of the world is seen in its succession of evil kingdoms in different ages and in different countries, always the same in spirit and always carrying out the will of Satan. Its capital is the typical luxurious and corrupt city. We are given a description of the luxury and wickedness which bring about its destruction, and we see the lamentation and dismay which its fall causes in the world. Then in contrast we behold the final triumph of the Church and its true glory and beauty as contrasted with the sordid splendour of the world. The dominion and false religion of the world are finally destroyed. Right triumphs and Christ and His people rule undisturbed by the operations of evil. But even after that there must be a time of testing, and evil breaks out once more to be finally destroyed by Christ Himself. Then follows the Last Judg-

ment when all men will receive the reward of their actions. At length we see the final glory to which the Church will attain when she is freed from all defilement, and lives in the unclouded light of the presence of God. The whole earth will exist under new conditions of purity and peace, while God will be ever present with His people and the Holy Spirit will ever be their guide.

With warnings of the speedy coming of Christ and of the certainty of the promises, the Book closes.

THE REVELATION

OF

ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God [1]gave him to shew unto his [2]servants, *even* the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified [3]*it* by his angel unto his servant John: 1

1 *Gave unto him, to shew unto his servants the things, etc.*
2 Gr. *bond-servants:* and so throughout this book.
3 Or *them.*

I. 1-3. Superscription.—*The source of the Revelation. God gave it to Jesus Christ, who signified it to John, by His angel. Its purpose is to shew to His servants things which must shortly come to pass. There is a blessing for those who read it publicly and for those who hear it.*

1. "*Revelation.*"—For the meaning and scope of this word, see Introduction, p. 1.

"*Of Jesus Christ.*"—The context seems to shew that these words mean "given by Jesus Christ," cp. Gal. i. 12, and not that it is a revelation of the character and work of Jesus Christ, though this also would be true, and such a meaning is given by many commentators.

"*Which God gave unto him.*"—Cp. St. John v. 20. 'The Father loveth the Son and sheweth him all things that himself doeth.'

"*Things which must shortly come to pass.*"—"Must" (Dan. ii. 28) not the necessity of fate, but the "sure fulfilment of the purpose of God, revealed by the prophets" (Swete). 'Shortly' means "soon" in point of time. Though the Revelation contains prophecies of Christ's Second Coming which have not yet been fulfilled, the word "shortly" need not prove a difficulty, for the Book contains primarily teaching and encouragement for the churches of Asia and in a sense was fulfilled to them. Cp. St. Luke xxi. 32. 'This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled,' where again there is a near fulfilment in the Destruction of Jerusalem and a remote fulfilment in the Second Coming. God is not limited by earthly measurements of time. Cp. St. Luke xviii. 8. The Revelation deals with principles which are always at work and in this sense also there is no delay in the fulfilment.

"*He sent and signified it by his angel,*" chap. xxii. 16.—The angel is mentioned xvii. 1, xix. 10, xxi. 9 but not in the earlier part of the Vision.

2 Who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, *even* of all things that he saw.

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from him which is and which was and [1]which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne;

1 Or *which cometh.*

"*Signified.*"—The Revelation was given by means of signs and visions. xii. 1, xv. 1. Thus the course of the Revelation is traced from the mind of God, to Jesus Christ, through an angel to John.

2. "*Who bare witness of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ.*"—That is by writing the Revelation. Some have thought that the witness referred to is the Gospel, but the meaning is more general. The word of God is not here the name of Christ, but the teaching imparted, and especially the Revelation of God. The words "of all things that he saw" confirm the view that the witness is the present book.

3. "*He that readeth.*"—The reference is primarily to the public reading of the book (St. Luke xi. 28) for the "hearers" are mentioned. St. James reminds us that there is the duty of practising as well as hearing. St. James i. 22.

"*Prophecy,*" xxii. 7.—Revelation is a form of prophecy.

"*The time is at hand.*"—Cp. xxii. 10, and note on verse 1 above.

In this Introduction it is important to notice the will of God that His people should understand His dealings with them. He shews His will to Jesus Christ, and He sends an angel to shew it to John, and he in his turn shews it to the Church. God gives a blessing to those who understand His will, and all who desire to understand may do so, for He has revealed it.

4-8. GREETING TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

The Epistle (for so the Revelation is in form) is addressed by John to the seven Churches which are in Asia. He greets them in the name of the Trinity, giving each Person a title in conformity with the subject of the book. The name of Jesus Christ calls forth a doxology for all that He has done for men. Then we have the statement of His second coming attested by a solemn affirmation of His truth and unchangeableness.

4. "*The seven Churches.*"—The number is chosen not only because seven is the perfect number (Prov. ix. 1) and so represents all the Church, but because the seven Churches of Asia were probably already well known as a group of seven and were centres from which the surrounding districts could be reached. (See Introduction.)

"*Asia.*"—As has been explained in the Introduction, Asia in the New Testament is simply the region of the Western seaboard of Asia Minor (with part of Phrygia) and not the whole continent.

"*From Him which is and which was and which is to come.*"—Consider the nobleness of this title as contrasted with the title of any earthly

And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, the 5
first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

king. The Churches of Asia were at this time suffering persecution because they refused to yield to the claims of the Roman Emperor, who, not content with ruling the world, must needs be a god too. By this great title does the King of Kings set His claim before the Churches of Asia. It is noteworthy that this title was first revealed in all its meaning at a time when another king (Pharaoh) was setting up his pretensions against God (Exod. vi. 3); for this is the New Testament rendering of Jehovah (Exod. iii. 14). It expresses the faithfulness and unchangeableness of God. The name is appropriate here, for the chief purpose of this book is to exhibit the working out of the unchanging purposes of God in His Kingdom.

"*Which is to come.*"—Besides the idea of the unchangeable God, the phrase is used as a reminder that God is coming in a special sense. Every revelation of Himself is, in a sense, a coming. But there will be a special coming, when Christ "shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

"*And from the seven spirits.*"—The Holy Spirit in sevenfold manifestation. Cp. chap. v. 6, Zech. iv. 10. The seven spirits are specially connected with the Church, symbolized in Zechariah by Zerubbabel's temple and here represented by the seven Churches of Asia. Some writers reckon seven manifestations of the Spirit in Isaiah xi. 2.

5. "*The faithful witness, and the first-born of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*"—These titles are recalled in the epistle to the Church of Laodicea, the weak, compromising Church. Christ as faithful witness and as the beginning of the creation of God exhorts it and gives the promise of the throne which he had won by his victory. The three titles would convey much comfort to the Churches of Asia opposed as they were by false religion and false philosophy, suffering martyrdom and persecution because they would not give the honour of the Prince of the kings of the earth to a mere earthly ruler.

But we are reminded by these titles that Christ will come to sustain His right to all these titles, Prophet, Priest and King. In all these characters He is now working, and in the Revelation we shall see something of His manner of work.

"*The faithful witness.*"—Christ who is the true Light which lighteth every man who cometh into the world, is emphatically the witness of God to man. His Incarnation was the culmination of this witness (St. John xviii. 37). "To this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." It is not only that Christ fulfils all His promises and prophecies. It is not only that He thereby justifies the faith of His people. But as Man He fulfils the purpose of God and witnesses to the truth, which could otherwise never have been understood by men. This witness could only have been given by One who was Son of Man and Son of God. So emphatically the Revelation is "the testimony of Jesus Christ" (verse 1). Others, however, take the word here, as elsewhere in Revelation, to mean a witness by suffering, a confessor or martyr, Cp. 1 Tim. vi. 13.

"*The first-born from the dead.*"—The meaning of this title is not only that He was the first who rose in glory from the grave, but that by His resurrec-

Unto him that loveth us, and [1]loosed us from our sins [2]by his blood;

And he made us *to be* a kingdom, *to be*

[1] Many authorities, some ancient, read *washed*.
[2] Gr. *in*.

tion He became in a new sense Lord over all men. The phrase is intimately connected with His Sonship, His Priesthood and His Kingship. By resurrection He became the Second Adam, and in a new sense the Son of God. Psalm ii. 7 "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" refers to the Resurrection (Acts xiii. 33). His Priesthood is based on the power of an endless life (Heb. vii. 16). "He is the Head of the Body, the Church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence," Col. i. 18. And so He is the Head of the New Creation as well as the Prince of the kings of the earth.

"*Ruler of the kings of the earth.*"—Ruler therefore of the Roman Emperor, the god of Asia. The right of Christ to be Ruler was won anew at the Resurrection, cp. Rom. xiv. 9. 'For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.' Zechariah also connects the Priesthood with the Kingdom (vi. 13). 'He shall be a priest upon his throne.' As is shown in Heb. vii. 15-17, and vii. 24 the Resurrection made Christ Priest and as Priest He sits upon His throne. But there is another title to the Kingdom which He won. God made man to "have dominion" (Gen. i. 26) with the condition that he should grow in the likeness of God before he won it. Man by sin lost both the likeness and the dominion. Jesus Christ became man in the image of God, "grew in favour with God, and man" (St. Luke ii. 52) and recovered the dominion. He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead (Rom. i. 4). In Psalm ii. 8 God addresses the Son and says "Ask of me and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

"*Unto him that loveth us and loosed* (i.e., *redeemed*) *us from our sins in his own blood.*"—Christ always loves us and so we have "loveth" and not "loved." At His death He loosed us once for all (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). The redemption was by blood, the price paid for our deliverance. "If we ask when Christ freed us, the answer must be at His Passion, not at our conversion or baptism." (Camb. Bible *ad loc.*) A change of one letter makes "loosed" into "washed" in Greek, for which metaphor compare Zech. xiii. 1. The blood is the emblem of the life laid down, which was the price paid for our redemption.

6. "*And he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests.*"—These words would come with great force and comfort to the Churches of Asia; for the civil power (the kingdom) was there leagued in an unholy alliance with the religious community (the priests) to enforce the worship of the Roman Emperor. The Church had to reply to this alliance by her double witness as a kingdom and a priesthood (Rev. xi. 3). This is her function from her foundation at Sinai (Exod. xix. 6). 'Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests.' This promise (unrealized under the old covenant) was given anew to the Church of Pentecost (1 Pet. ii. 5-9). The Romans tried to weld their Empire together by the worship of the Emperor whom they had themselves set upon the throne. Christ unites His people in Himself to

priests unto his God and Father; to him *be* the glory and the dominion [1]for ever and ever. Amen.

Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they which pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over 7

1 Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.* Many ancient authorities omit *of the ages.*

God by means of His Spirit. Christians united with Christ become a holy community.

"*Priests.*"—Not the priesthood which called men to worship an earthly emperor, but the priesthood which is won by the power of an endless life. Those who share Christ's life share His priesthood (Col. iii. 1-5). Priesthood implies holiness. It also involves intercession for others, a responsibility to those around us who do not know God: cp. 1 Pet. ii. 11, 12 "Having your behaviour seemly among the Gentiles that wherein they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." This is the service of all true Christians in the Temple of God, the Church. "Baptism inaugurates this priestly service" (Eph. v. 26, Heb. x. 22, Tit. iii. 5) which is fulfilled by the offering of living, reasonable and spiritual sacrifices (Rom. xii. 1; Heb. xiii. 15 and foll.; 1 Pet. ii. 5). "That there are special ministries within the Body of Christ (Rom. xv. 16) in no way conflicts with the reality of the priesthood which is the privilege of every baptized member of Christ" (Swete).

"*To him.*"—That is to Jesus Christ.

7. This verse is a combination of earlier passages of Scripture and is as it were the "text" of the Revelation. In it is summed up the teaching of the Book, namely, the Coming of Christ in glory and the discomfiture of His enemies. Christ is coming. His coming will be seen by every eye: it will stir to mourning those who by their impenitence have numbered themselves among those who pierced Him.

"*Behold he cometh with the clouds.*"—Cp. St. Matt. xxiv. 30. When Christ spoke these words His ministry on earth was complete. He had just left the Temple never to return. The bargain for His betrayal had been made and to earthly eyes His mission was a failure. And yet at that moment He announced His triumph. It is a wonderful contrast. His words are perhaps quoted here as a reminder to the suffering Church that even in the hour of humiliation, Christ looked forward to a kingdom and that His followers may do the same.

"*With the clouds.*"—Dan. vii. 13, Acts i. 9-11.

"*And every eye shall see him and they which pierced him.*"—Those to whom these words were first addressed would remember that the Romans who pierced Christ were now setting up their own ruler in His place as the god of the world, and would be comforted by the prophecy of Christ's triumph. "But it is not the original crucifiers who are here indicated, so much as those who in every age share the indifference or the hostility which lay behind the act" (Swete). The quotation is from Zech. xii. 10, where it is connected with the penitence of the Israelites, and there follows (xiii. 1) a prophecy of the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Cp. St. Matt. xxvi. 64 where Christ warns His enemies of His coming, which they were to witness.

"*All the tribes of the earth.*"—This part of the quotation is from

8 him. Even so, Amen.

1 Or, *the Lord, the God.* 2 Or *he which.*

I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith [1]the Lord God, [2]which is and which was, and [2]which is to come, the Almighty.

9 I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribula-

St. Matt. xxiv. 30. Not only the Jews who rejected and crucified our Saviour, but all who have by their unbelief identified themselves with that sin and approved it by act, if not by word, shall mourn when Christ is revealed from heaven. Christ calls on all who desire to share in His kingdom to repent and mourn for their sin while there is still time. Repentance and mourning now, or remorse and useless mourning then, are the alternatives. In connexion with the word "tribes" we may remember that it is the word which represents the political divisions of the cities of Asia, corresponding to "wards" in a Municipality.

"*Even so, Amen.*"—The apostle combines the Greek and Hebrew affirmations in order to render the prophecy more emphatic, and there follows a solemn declaration from God the Father of His eternity and power.

8. "*I am the Alpha and the Omega.*"—The first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet were used to express totality. Here the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet are so used. The words "the beginning and the ending," which follow in chap. xxii. 13:explain the meaning. In Him are all things and unto Him are all things. The early Christian writers explain the phrase to mean "not eternity only but the boundless life which embraces all while it transcends all" (Swete).

"*Saith the Lord.*"—This is the phrase with which the Old Testament prophets attested their message and St. John by its use associates himself with them. It is not used elsewhere in the New Testament except in quotations.

"*Which is.*"—Verse 4 and note. The affirmation of His unchangeableness comes appropriately after the solemn prophecy of His coming.

"*The Almighty.*"—Represents the Hebrew "Sabaoth" and means literally "hosts." This name was probably first used in connexion with the armies of Israel. But later the hosts were understood of the stars; and the commanding of these and causing them to perform their regular movements, was held to be the highest conceivable exercise of power. Hence "Jehovah of hosts" means "omnipotent" and is so rendered here. (Theology of Old Testament, Davidson).

4-8. Where every word carries teaching and comfort it is impossible to single out one part as more important than another, but three thoughts are perhaps pre-eminent here, the greatness and love of our Saviour, the glory of our calling in Him and the coming triumph of our King.

9-20. *Vision of Jesus Christ Risen and Ascended, seen by the Apostle in the isle of Patmos.—The Lord is walking in the midst of the candlesticks, which are the seven Churches, and He holds in His hand the seven stars which are the seven angels of the Churches. The vision is to be written by John and sent to the seven Churches.*

9. "*Brother.*"—The humility of the title is noteworthy. Compare 1 Pet. v. 1 for a similar instance.

tion and kingdom and patience *which are* in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind 10
me a great voice, as of a trumpet.

Saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* to 11
the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia and unto Laodicea.

And I turned to see the voice which spake 12
with me. And having turned I saw seven golden [1]candlesticks:

[1] Gr. *lampstands*.

"*Partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus.*"—They were suffering tribulation because they would not conform to this world, even as now Christ's servants have to endure exclusion from caste and other persecutions for the truth's sake. The Kingdom of God was to them all the more real in that it was opposed to the kingdom of the world, to which they were counted traitors. But this Kingdom of God is not yet established visibly and so the patience of Jesus is required in those who wait for it. By such common sufferings and common hopes Christians are bound together (2 Cor. i. 7). It is through tribulation that we must pass to the Kingdom (2 Tim. ii. 11, 12). 'We see not yet all things put under Him but we see Jesus' (Heb. ii. 9) and as Christ has promised (chap. iii. 10) those who keep the word of His patience shall be kept in the hour of temptation.

"*In Jesus.*"—Except perhaps in xxii. 21, the name "Jesus Christ" disappears after i. 5 and we have only "Jesus" emphasizing His Humanity and His identity with the suffering Son of Man.

"*Patmos.*"—See Introduction. 'Date and place of writing.'

"*For the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*"—Cp. Rev. vi. 9. This passage agrees with the early tradition that St. John had been banished to Patmos for his preaching of the Gospel (for this is what the phrase appears to mean), and proves that his presence in the island was due to his punishment. Prisoners of low rank were often sent to work in quarries and mines, and this was almost certainly St. John's fate.

10. "*I was in the Spirit.*"—A state of ecstacy is indicated, in which the prophet sees visions and hears words which are beyond the ken of men in their normal condition (Acts xxii. 17, 2 Cor. xii. 1-5).

"*The Lord's day.*"—The first use of this name for Sunday, the Resurrection day.

"*Heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet.*"—Ezek. iii. 12.

12. "*Seven golden candlesticks.*"—The candlestick is the symbol of the Church in the Old Testament. In the first Tabernacle it was placed in the Holy Place outside the veil, which screened off the Holy of Holies, and is fully described in Exod. xxv. 31-40. In Solomon's temple there were ten such candlesticks (1 Kings vii. 49); Zechariah (chap iv.) described one candlestick fed by oil from two olive trees, and thereby taught that the Church—in those days very small and weak—should build the Temple

13 And in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto [1]a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt at the breasts with a golden girdle.

1 Or *the son of man.*

14 And his head and his hairs were white as white wool, *white* as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire:

15 And his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been

of God, "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." Oil is a well known symbol of the Spirit of God. The light of the Church, or of individual Christians, is the testimony given by their lives to those around them (St. Matt. v. 14-16, Phil. ii. 15, cp. notes on verse 20).

13. The vision of this Son of Man contains all the features emphasized in the epistles to the seven Churches (chaps. ii. iii). Some bear a message of love and some of judgment. He that hath the seven Spirits and the seven stars will have the faithful Christians of Sardis to walk with Him in white (iii. 1, 4). He that was dead and lived again will deliver Smyrna from the second death (ii. 8, 11). He that hath the key opens the door before the Church of Philadelphia (iii. 7, 8). He that walks amidst the candlesticks will remove the candlestick of Ephesus (ii. 1, 5). He that hath the sharp sword will fight against the Nicolaitans of Pergamum (ii. 12, 16). He who hath eyes of fire searcheth the reins and hearts of Thyatira (ii. 18, 23). He who is the faithful and true witness reveals to Laodicea her true state (iii. 14. 17).

"*In the midst of the candlesticks.*"—In fulfilment of His promise, "Lo, I am with you always" (St. Matt. xxviii. 20). Christ appears walking in the midst of the candlesticks, which represent the Churches, and He thereby teaches us a much-needed lesson of unity. He walks in the midst of all the Churches, not with one or two alone.

"*One like unto a son of man.*"—The title is not that special title which Jesus appropriated to Himself ("the Son of Man"), but is taken from Dan. vii. 13 where a "son of man" appears in order to end the misrule of the worldly powers symbolized by beasts. He appears as "a son of man" in accordance with His humility and love described in Heb. ii. 12. 'I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation (church) will I sing thy praise.'

"*Clothed with a garment down to the foot.*"—This garment has been generally taken to signify the priestly robe, and the word translated "down to the foot" is used of the priestly garments in the Septuagint (Cp. Zech. iii. 4, Dan. x. 5). It is in form like the long "Jibbeh" worn by Arabs.

"*Golden girdle.*"—Dan. x. 5. Cp. also Isaiah xi. 5. 'Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.'

14. "*His head and his hairs were white as white wool, as white as snow.*"—The reference is to Dan. vii. 9 where the Ancient of Days is so described. Some explain the symbol by the fact that Jesus Christ is from all eternity unchangeable: others by His purity and glory.

"*His eyes were as a flame of fire.*"—Dan. x. 6. We have the fact referred to again, Rev. ii. 18 and xix. 12, from both of which passages it appears that the symbol indicates power to search the heart and to judge aright.

15. "*His feet were like unto burnished brass.*"—It appears that the

refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters.

And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his 16
mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he 17
laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the

brass referred to was a manufacture of Thyatira, and here it seems to symbolize strength to trample foes under foot (Rev. ii. 18, 23, 27). In the Old Testament too, brass is generally associated with strength (Job xl. 18; Micah iv. 13). The actual word employed here is "chalcolibanos" and it was probably some mixture of bronze and gold.

"*His voice as the voice of many waters.*"—Ezek. xliii. 2, Dan. x. 6, Rev. xiv. 2. "By this comparison of the voice of the Lord to 'the voice of many waters' is not to be understood the preaching of the gospel, but the terribleness of the voice with which He will rebuke His foes within the church and without" (Trench).

16. "*And he had in his right hand seven stars.*"—What St. John saw was probably a garland of stars hanging from the right hand of the Saviour. As we have seen, the Book of Revelation is a book of contrasts continually setting before us the earthly and its heavenly counterpart. So we have had the candlestick representing the earthly light of the Church, and now we have the star representing the heavenly side of the same truth, the angel of the Church. The symbolism is well explained by Alford. "He holds the stars in His hand; He appears as their Guardian, their Provider, their Nourisher; and we may add their Possessor, who brings them out and puts them forth to be seen when He pleases." The main duty of a Church situated as the Churches of Asia were and as the Church of India is to-day, is to shine among those who are still in darkness. This can only be when the Church is in the hand of Christ, and when He is walking in the midst of the candlesticks.

"*Out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword.*"—Isaiah xi. 4. 'He will smite the earth with the rod of his mouth.' xlix. 2, "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword" (cp. Eph. vi. 17, Heb. iv. 12). The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, and there can be no doubt that the spoken word of God is here symbolized. The sword is mentioned in the epistle to Pergamum where it is the symbol of Christ's authority as contrasted with the Roman authority in their capital city, the "throne of Satan." He speaks and it is done. He commands and the world is created. The Word of the Lord is His Power manifested.

"*His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*"—Jud. v. 31. 'Let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might' (cp. St. Matt. xiii. 43, xvii. 2).

17. "*I fell at his feet as one dead.*"—This is always the effect of the vision of the glory of God (Dan. x. 8, 9).

"*His right hand*"—That the right hand holds the seven stars does not hinder it from being laid on the seer. . . . The Hand that sustains Nature and the Churches at the same time quickens and raises individual lives" (Swete).

first and the last,

18 And the Living one; and I [1]was dead, and behold, I am alive [2]for ever more, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

[1] Gr. became. [2] Gr. unto the ages of the ages.

19 Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter:

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest [3]in my right hand, and the seven golden

[3] Gr. upon.

"*I am the first and the last.*"—Cp. verse 8, Isaiah xliv. 6, xlviii. 12. "It is the expression of absolute Godhead. He is from eternity to eternity, so that there is no room for any other. All creation comes forth from Him (St. John i. 1-3), all creation returns to Him again, as from whom and by whom and to whom are all things" (Trench). It is the Christian expression of the truth that in Him alone all things consist, and is opposed to the impersonal pantheistic idea.

18. "*And the Living one; and I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever more.*"—"The Living One" is the title of God, for He alone has life in Himself (Deut. v. 26, Josh. iii. 10). In St. John v. 26 Christ claims the same life as the Father has. 'For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself.'" He is the Living One in contrast to the dead gods of the heathen (Jer. x. 10, 11. 1 Thess. i. 9).

"*And I was dead.*"—Rather "I became dead." Here the reference is to Christ's human nature which passed through death. The Living One became dead, cp. Acts iii. 15. 'Ye killed the Prince of Life.'

"*Behold I am alive for evermore.*"—Here we have the human life of the resurrection. It is perhaps best explained as "fellowship with God." The human life of Jesus had perfect fellowship with God and so it was not possible that He should be holden of the pains of death (Acts ii. 24). In His person are now combined the life of God and the life of Man (St. John xi. 25).

"*And have the keys of death and of Hades.*"—"He was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hell," i.e., into Hades, the place of departed spirits. Now He has full authority over death and over the domain of death, because He won the victory over death. He openeth and no man shutteth and shutteth and no man openeth (St. John v. 28). Authority is symbolized by the possession of the keys.

"*Keys.*"—Gates of Hades are spoken of in Psalm ix. 13, St. Matt. xvi. 18. These words were written in the days when cities were walled and had gates. In the Epistle to Philadelphia Christ speaks of having the key of David and opening the door of opportunity before the Church.

19. "*Which thou sawest.*"—I.e., the vision which he had just seen.

"*Things which are and the things which shall come to pass.*"—The present and future state of the Church and of the world as recounted in the Book of Revelation.

20. "*Mystery.*"—This word is used in the Greek of the Old Testament eight times in Daniel and also in later Jewish writers meaning 'a secret

[1]candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven [1]candlesticks are seven churches.

1 Gr. *lampstands.*

of State' or a secret. In St. Paul's Epistles it signifies a truth which was once hidden but now is revealed to Christians, a truth often strange and difficult to understand. St. Paul's special mystery spoken of in Colossians (i. 26) and Eph. (iii. 3) is the free admission of the Gentiles on equal terms with the Jews into the Christian Church. In Revelation it appears to signify something symbolized by a mysterious symbol and now declared. In x. 7 where it recurs it appears to bear the ordinary New Testament meaning of something revealed to Christians, but not to the world. See Introduction, p. 25 and note on x. 7.

"*Seven.*"—This number is used fifty-four times in the Revelation and very frequently throughout the whole Scriptures. To the Hebrew mind seven denotes completeness. The seven days of Creation and Rest strike this note at the beginning of the Bible. So the seven Churches are symbolical of the complete Church of God. The seven Spirits represent the One Spirit of God in all His activities in the seven-fold Church (Zech. iv. 10). The seven horns denote the complete dominion of the world which the Lamb has won (v. 6). The seven heads represent the usurped dominion over the whole world which Satan and Antichrist claim, xii. 3, xiii. 1 (See Introduction, Symbolism).

"*The seven stars are the angels of the Churches.*"—The interpretation of the "angels" has proved a great difficulty. The first point to notice is, that the Revelation is full of contrasts of the heavenly and the earthly, the ideal and the actual. Here the contrast is between the ideal Church and the actual Church. The star symbolizes the ideal, the candlestick the actual. We have therefore a Church, on earth, and an angel, in heaven. The angel is addressed in the exhortations to the Church and he is blamed for its failures and praised for its progress. He is threatened with the removal of his candlestick, his earthly Church. In Daniel (x. 13, xii. 1) we have the same idea applied to the kingdoms of the earth, where "princes" are spoken of as representing them, and the angel Michael is the prince who stands for Israel (Dan. x. 13, 21). The Jews believed that angels often assumed the form of those whom they guarded. So (Acts xii. 15) the people thought that the angel of Peter was at the door. Christ Himself says that every little one has an angel in the presence of God (St. Matt. xviii. 10). It seems therefore probable that the angel here is representative of the Church. Others have taken them as "bishops," but there is no parallel for this title for a bishop. Thus the meaning of the vision of the stars and of the candlesticks seems to be that there is in God's sight an ideal and an actual Church. The star would represent the ideal towards which the Church would gradually rise, the candlestick, the actual earthly condition. Candlesticks are earthly and so well represent the Church on earth. Stars are heavenly and well represent the ideal to which the Church on earth must advance.

"*Candlestick.*"—This is the earthly counterpart of the star (the angel) and symbolizes the Church on earth. The idea of the whole body of believers and of individuals shining in the world is common to the Old and New Testaments (Isaiah. lx. 1, St. Matt. v. 16, Phil. ii. 15).

1 II. To the angel of the church in Ephesus write; These things

The Light of the World is in the midst of the Churches and they must shine in heaven as stars and on earth as candlesticks. No easy compromise with heathenism or the world must dim their light, which will be all the brighter if purified by persecution for the sake of their Master. We must remember that none are so quick to find out the faults and inconsistencies in Christians as their opponents, and to make these an excuse for not entering the fold of Christ.

CHAPTERS II, III.

The Epistles to the Seven Churches.

The general form in which all the Epistles to the seven Churches are cast should first be observed. Each Epistle consists of the following parts:—

(*a*) The command to write.

(*b*) A title of the Saviour chosen with special reference to the subject of the Epistle.

(*c*) The description of the state of the church addressed.

(*d*) An exhortation thereon.

(*e*) A suitable promise of reward to "him that overcometh."

(*f*) A general command to "him that hath ears" to hear what the Spirit saith.

It will be seen that each Epistle begins in the name of the Son of God and ends with the exhortation of the Spirit either before or after the promise "to him that overcometh." This fact gives a most solemn character to the message which is endorsed in the name of the Son and of the Spirit.

II. 1-7. The Epistle to the Church of Ephesus,

the changing City.

He who walks in the midst of the Churches finds the Church of Ephesus orthodox still, but having left its first love. If it does not repent, its candlestick will be removed, even though it has resisted the Nicolaitan heretics. He that overcometh shall eat of the tree of life.

1. "*Ephesus.*"—Ephesus has been called the city of change and in truth its history justifies the title. From the geographical point of view the city has shifted as the sea has receded and left it finally in its present position at some distance from the shore. Originally inhabited by Asiatic villagers it was in 1100 B.C. colonized by Greeks. In 560 B.C. it was conquered by the Asiatic King Croesus and the situation of the city was changed. While other Greek cities in the neighbourhood banded together to resist the Persians, Ephesus was always inclined to side with the Persians against the Greeks; but at times the Greek influence was too strong and it was enrolled in the Greek confederacy in 479 B.C. When Alexander the Great conquered Asia (335 B.C.) Ephesus became far more Greek than hitherto in its worship and sympathies. The King Lysimachus shifted the situation of the city and rebuilt it in a new place

saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks:

I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou 2

under the name of Arsinoe, but after his death in 281 B.C. the old name of Ephesus revived. Once more in 196 B.C. it was captured by Antiochus the Great and the Greek spirit had to give way to the Asiatic. In 133 B.C. Asia became a Roman province and Ephesus being the chief harbour of Asia was a very important place, though not the actual capital. Its worship also reflected its mixed origin. We find at one time the old goddess of nature, symbolized by a bee, upon the coins of Ephesus, at another time the human figure of the Greek huntress goddess Artemis, whose cult was combined with the old nature worship. The magnificent Ephesian temple of Artemis became a place of pilgrimage for Asia and the whole world (Acts xix). St. Paul made the city his centre for the evangelization of Asia and spent some years there and later on, according to second century accounts, St. John settled down there. Even in its Christianity the city retained its reputation for change and in this epistle St. John has to reproach it because it has left its first love, and it is threatened with another change, the removal of its candlestick, if it does not repent.

Ephesus is addressed first, both because it was the most important city of Asia and also because it was the natural starting point for a messenger. It prided itself upon being always the first city where the Roman Governor landed. It was fitting therefore that the message from the King of Kings should first be conveyed to it.

"*He that holdeth.*"—This is a stronger word than that employed in i. 16. It implies that Christ holds fast the stars, the angels of the Churches, and will not let them go. It is a suitable reminder to this changing Church that though man may change, the Lord changes not and if they remain founded on Him there is no need for them to change, cp. St. John x. 28, 'No one shall snatch them out of my hand.'

"*He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*"—Ephesus may be said to be in the midst of the seven Churches of Asia and if her Lord is in her, He is in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. From that position he exhorts the Church. While Satan walks about seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. v. 8) Christ walks in the midst of the Church to seek and to save that which is lost. His "walking" denotes activity in guarding, guiding, reproving, etc. This activity is the proper sphere of a Church and we may understand from the walking of the Saviour that He would have His Church active in His service.

2. "*I know thy works.*"—There is nothing hid from Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire. Cp. Isaiah iii. 8. 'Their tongue and their doings are against the Lord to provoke the eyes of His glory.'

"*Toil and patience.*"—Cp. 1 Thess. i. 3. 'Your work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and our Father.' These two words explain "works." Toil is used technically in the New Testament of Christian activity. It is the active side of Christian life and has its foundation in love. There is another side, the quiet, patient side. That has its foundation in hope. We cannot afford to neglect either the toil or the patience, if the Church is to prosper. There is a great temptation for those who are engaged in the ministry of the

canst not bear evil men, and didst try them which call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false:
3 And thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary.
4 But I have *this* against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love.

Church "to measure out for themselves tasks which are too light and inadequate. We give exactly the number of hours which we please; we are for the most part responsible to no man; how near the danger that we should unduly spare ourselves and make our burdens far lighter than they should have been! We may well keep this word 'labour unto weariness' and all that it signifies in mind and remember that it is this which the Lord praises" (Trench). There is also a great temptation for those, who have no definite work assigned them in the Church, to think that they are therefore relieved from all responsibility of toiling for their Master.

"*Evil men.*"—Not the heathen, but false Christians, especially those who would make a compromise with heathenism, as the Nicolaitans did. Not the weak brethren, but the traitors (1 Cor. v. 11, 2 Tim. ii. 19).

"*Thou didst try them which called themselves apostles and they are not.*"—The word apostle was used in the 1st century much more widely than of the 'Twelve and St. Paul.' It was a name given to itinerant missionaries of the first rank or order (see Lightfoot's Excursus, Galatians, p. 92). Ephesus was a highway not only for martyrs as St. Ignatius called it ("the passage way of those who are slain unto God") but for many a Christian preacher on his travels. Then, as now, such preachers had to be tested. Various tests were enjoined. St. John in his first epistle (iv. 1, 2) makes the acknowledgment of the coming of Christ in the flesh the test. Our Lord says "By their fruits ye shall know them" (St. Matt. vii. 20), a test of practical life. In Acts xx. 29-31, St. Paul warned the Ephesians that false apostles would come. In the Didache (Teaching of the Apostles) a very practical test is suggested and one of which the truth is seen frequently in India. "If he ask for money he is a false prophet. If he stay for more than three days he is a false prophet." But it also adds "if he have the ways of the Lord: therefore by his ways he shall be known." It was not an uncommon thing for such wandering preachers to come into a church and claim more authority than the resident pastor and great confusion arose. The Ephesian Church had rigidly tested such men and expelled them.

3. "*Thou has not grown weary.*"—The chief temptation which besets the Christian worker, particularly in an enervating or tropical climate, is to grow weary in well doing, to relax efforts which have begun in a glow of enthusiasm and hope. The Ephesians had not succumbed to this temptation. Their motive too had been the most lofty. They had struggled for the name of Christ.

4. "*Thou didst leave thy first love.*"—This was the second generation of Christians and it is a sad truth that those who have been born in the faith and have not had to undergo the struggles and trials which often accompany the renunciation of an old belief, lose something of their keenness and love and are drawn into the pursuit of worldly things.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and 5
repent, and do the first works; or else I come
to thee, and will move thy [1]candlestick out of its
place, except thou repent.

[1] Gr. *lamp-stand.*

But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the 6
Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Another cause which produces this coldness is controversy, and the Ephesians, while preserving their orthodoxy, had had to engage in conflict with false teachers.

5. "*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works.*"—Three stages in their recovery; Remember, Repent, Do. "Christ does not say 'Feel the first feelings,'—that perhaps would have been impossible, and even if possible might have had little value in it; but 'do the first works, such as thou didst in the time of thy devotedness and zeal'" (Trench). Repentance unaccompanied by deeds is of no value. It must include confession and restitution and amendment of life. When a wave of revival sweeps over a Church, it will be found that those who are genuinely affected, make restitution where they have defrauded others, and where this is not done we may be sure that the revival is not genuine.

"*Move thy candlestick.*"—God chooses nations and churches in order that they may perform His will, especially in regard to those around them. Those who do not use their privileges and opportunities find them taken away (St. Luke xix. 24, 'Take from him the pound and give it to him that hath ten pounds'). Unless a Church performs her duty, God will give her place and privileges to another. The Jews saw this, when they said that the vineyard would be given to other husbandmen, who would bring the fruits in due season. Ephesus survived as a Church till the eleventh century and at last disappeared, and this fact, though it can hardly be the fulfilment of the present saying, is certainly an illustration of the principle laid down.

6. "*Nicolaitans.*"—Nothing is known as to the name of these heretics. Their doctrine is said to have been Gnostic (i.e., theosophical) in character, and when we reflect that these letters were written in the birthplace of Greek philosophy, it is not surprising if some attempt were made to unite Christian and pagan philosophic systems, as we see being done in India now. But it was the practical teaching of the Nicolaitans which was so abhorrent to St. John. In the letters to Pergamum and Thyatira he compares it to the teaching of Balaam. The practical question which was being fought out is of very real interest to-day. How far may Christians consistently mix with non-Christians and even take part in ceremonies which, though admittedly idolatrous in their origin, have lost all their idolatrous meaning? St. John speaking on behalf of his Master condemns in the sternest language the attitude of the Nicolaitans on this point. They had apparently gone far beyond the liberty allowed by the Council at Jerusalem (Acts xv) and by St. Paul (cp. Rom. xiv, and 1 Cor. x) and allowed actual participation in idol feasts. Every tribe in Ephesus as in other cities was organized, as castes are in India, on a religious basis, and when men were converted out of different tribes they

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the [1]paradise of God.

1 Or. *garden* as in Gen. ii. 8.

had to solve many difficult problems as to how far they might go with their heathen fellow tribesmen. St. Paul laid down some clear rules in the first Epistle to the Corinthians. The Nicolaitans apparently despised as old-fashioned and ignorant those who felt scruples in the matter and went so far in their acquiescence in heathen customs as to incur a comparison with Balaam, who entrapped the Israelites into taking part in licentious feasts (Num. xxv) and immorality. We must not forget that immoral practices were inseparably bound up with the worship in the Ephesian temples.

"*Which I also hate.*"—We must not confuse hatred of evil deeds with hatred of evil men, for it is possible to love the man and hate his deeds. In fact the more we love the doer, the more we hate to see him doing unworthy and wrong acts. The Church which has the mind of Christ hates what He hates and loves what He loves.

7. "*He that hath an ear.*"—As a man's heart is, so is his interpretation of all he sees and hears. A man who is himself deceitful will always expect others to deceive him. And one whose heart is the temple of the Holy Spirit will have ears to hear and a heart to understand what the Spirit says to him. The expression occurs in St. Matt. xi. 15, xiii. 9, 43; St. Mk. iv. 9, 23; St. Lu. viii. 8, xiv. 35 (not in St. John).

"*To him that overcometh.*"—The victory is over sin and temptation. The word is often used by St. John in this sense (St. John. xvi. 33) 'I have overcome the world.' (1 John ii. 13), 'Ye have overcome the wicked one.' (Rev. iii. 21), 'I also overcame and sat down with my Father in His throne.' To St. John "faith" is victory (1 John v. 4).

"*The tree of life.*"—The story of the tree of life is one of the oldest in the world and has survived in many countries. The Persians speak of a tree called the death destroyer growing by a sacred fountain, to drink of whose sap gives immortality. In India trees are worshipped as immortal, e.g., the Akshaya Vata in Allahabad, etc. In Genesis when man was shut out of the garden of Eden he was expressly cut off from access to the tree of life. The tree of life symbolizes Christ, and to eat of the tree of life is to have close communion with Him, because every barrier is taken away. This tree of life is not merely immortal, but it gives life to man abundantly. In Christ there is no absorption or extinction but more abundant life. Those who overcome, as Christ overcame, enter the Paradise of God and receive fresh life and strength from Christ, the Tree of Life.

"*Paradise.*"—St. Luke xxiii. 43 where it means the state of the blessed dead. Here it seems to mean the heavenly garden through which the river of life flows (Rev. xxii. 1, Ezek. xlvii. 12) and where the tree of life is planted. Paradise then symbolizes the restoration of man to his sinless state of communion with God. It must be clearly understood that the terms used here and elsewhere ('Tree of Life,' etc.) are symbolical, not literal.

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These 8
things saith the first and the last, which [1]was
dead, and lived *again*:

1 Gr. *became.*

LESSONS OF THE EPISTLE TO EPHESUS.

A lesson of *constancy*.—Ephesus was a changing city and was losing her love which she ill replaced with cold orthodoxy: and she incurred reproof.

A lesson of *purity*.—Ephesus did not mix with the heathen and learn their ways as the Nicolaitans would have her do. For this she is commended by Christ Himself.

A lesson of *life*.—The only thing worth striving for is union and communion with God, and this is the promise to him that overcometh, for he shall eat of the tree of life.

8-11. THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA, THE CITY WITH THE CROWN OF LIFE.

He that was dead and lived again finds the Church of Smyrna in tribulation and poverty but rich in faith. She is troubled with false teachers who claim to be Jews and are not, and she is to suffer tribulation ten days, but he that overcometh will not be hurt by the second death.

8. "*Smyrna.*"—Founded by the Greeks a thousand years before Christ, the city survived till 600 B.C. when it was destroyed by an Asiatic King. It then became the name of a district comprising a number of villages but was not really a city. It was refounded by the successors of Alexander the Great and not long afterwards entered into a close alliance with Rome, in whose honour a temple was erected there as early as 195 B.C. The citizens prided themselves on their loyalty and a temple was dedicated to the Emperor Tiberius, A.D. 26. In Asia, Smyrna was "first in beauty and size," its chief claim to beauty being its crown of buildings on the hill which was its citadel. The crown of Smyrna is often alluded to by orators and writers, and there can be little doubt that the crown of life promised to the victorious martyrs in verse 10 is in contrast to the earthly crown of buildings. Apollonius, their own Pythagorean philosopher, born some four years before Christ, urged them to have a crown of men rather than of buildings; Christ offers them a crown of life.

St. Paul is said to have visited the city when he was in that part of Asia (Acts xix. 10) and the famous Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna. There are now three times as many Christians as Muhammadans there.

"*Write.*"—This letter is full of life and joy. It is a contrast to the letter to the Ephesian Church whose cold orthodoxy is praised while it is blamed for losing its first love.

"*The first and the last, which was dead and lived again.*"—To a city which was suffering persecution and trial these titles would bring comfort. From Christ all come: to Him all changes lead. The Lord is unchanging even though His people may have to suffer martyrdom and death and though the Church or the city may perish, He has overcome death. The way to reach the kingdom is through suffering. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him. Cp. St. John v. 25 and contrast the claim of Antichrist to have power over death (chap. xiii. 14).

9 I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the [1]blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

10 Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and [2]ye shall

1 Or. *reviling.*
2 Some ancient authorities read *and may have.*

9. "*Poverty.*"—As in other countries so here it was the poorer and less influential people who first accepted Christianity. The Church was in the early centuries often taunted with the fact that its membership consisted of slaves and the lowest of mankind. Apart from their initial poverty, as Christians they were often debarred from many privileges which made life easier and cheaper. There was no caste system in those days as there is in India, but the Christians were nevertheless made to feel that they had committed an offence against the community by forsaking their old religion and the result was boycott and exclusion. In some places where feeling ran high Christian houses were looted by the mob. Again Christianity raises a moral standard in business dealings which is not found in other religions, and we may be sure that the discontinuance of many petty dishonesties would make them poorer in this world's goods, but richer in the heavenly treasure.

"*But thou art rich.*"—James ii. 5. 'The poor of this world rich in faith.' (2 Cor. vi. 10), 'As poor yet making many rich.' Contrast Rev. iii. 17. 'Thou sayest, I am rich . . . and knowest not that thou art . . . poor.' (Heb. x. 34) 'Ye took cheerfully the spoiling of your possessions knowing that ye yourselves have (*or* ye have your ownselves for) a better possession.' The true riches are the treasure laid up in heaven, the life freed from defilement and sin. Note here, as so constantly, the contrast between the real and the seeming, the Kingdom of Christ and the world. This is the dominant note of the Revelation.

"*The blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not.*"—The poverty and tribulation of the Christians are connected with the Jews and we know that they were very bitter against those who had turned from Judaism to Christianity. In later years, when Polycarp was martyred, the Jews actually carried the wood for the pyre to burn him, although they thereby profaned the Sabbath day, and we may suppose that something of this feeling was apparent in the persecutions to which they subjected the Smyrnaeans at this time.

Again the contrast between the real and the nominal Jew, so insisted upon by St. Paul, is brought out. These are no true Jews; they are a synagogue of Satan. They may have the sign of circumcision in their flesh, but that does not make a true Jew any more than baptism without a Christian life makes a true Christian (Rom. ii. 28).

10. "*The devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days.*"—The persecution, though carried out by men, including the Jews who were the synagogue of Satan, was Satan's work. (St. Luke xxii. 31) 'Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat.' In addition to imprisonment on false accusations, which was a common form of persecution then, as it is now, the days were not far distant when Christianity itself was to become a crime punishable by law.

have [1]tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.

1 Gr. *a tribulation of ten days.*

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. 11.

Even a humane governor like Pliny thought the obstinacy of those who refused to give up their Christianity an offence worthy of punishment, though he could discover no crime in them. The "ten days" appear to mean a limited time. The persecution was not to last for ever. It is a thought full of comfort that Christ will make the time short for the elect's sake.

"*The crown of life.*"—Faithfulness was a virtue of the Smyrnaeans. They were praised for it by their Roman allies, and rewarded with their protection and the beautification of the crown of their citadel which consisted of splendid buildings. The meaning of the symbol of the crown of life is "eternal life which shall be the reward of victory" (St. James i. 12). 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.'

Two words are used for 'crown' in the New Testament, *stephanos* from which the name Stephen comes and *diadema*, a diadem. The former (generally a crown of leaves) is used specially for the crown of rejoicing with which the Greeks used to crown their guests (as garlands are employed in India) and with which the victors in the games were crowned. It usually symbolizes victory after conflict. The word 'diadem' is used three times in the New Testament (Rev. xii. 3, xiii. 1, xix. 12). It symbolizes dominion, and is connected with the dominion usurped by Satan and Antichrist and retaken by Christ.

11. "*The second death.*"—Rev. xx. 14. 'The lake of fire. This is the second death.' It is the death of the spirit, its eternal separation from God. Heaven is not absorption into the Deity, but a conscious communion with Him who is truly our Life. To miss that communion by living here in a state of hostility to God results in separation from Him eternally; this is the meaning of the second death. The phrase cannot, of course, imply any belief in transmigration.

LESSONS OF THE EPISTLE TO SMYRNA.

The true uses of *poverty* and *persecution* and the true meaning of *wealth*. Poverty and persecution are sent to turn our thoughts from earth to heaven and to keep us pure. True wealth is faithfulness.

A lesson of *steadfastness*. Often in trial and persecution we are tempted to give up in despair. It is faithfulness that wins the crown of life from Christ and which He specially commends.

18-17. THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF PERGAMUM, THE CITY WHERE IS SATAN'S THRONE.

He that hath the sharp two-edged sword, finds the Church of Pergamum, beset with temptations and standing firm, even though it had to give a martyr, Antipas, for the sake of the truth. But with this faithfulness there is creeping in laxity of doctrine and practice, and the Nicolaitans

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write; These
things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword:
13 I know where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's
throne is: and thou holdest fast my name, and
didst not deny my faith, even in the days [1]of
Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was
killed among you, where Satan dwelleth.

1 The Greek text here is somewhat uncertain.

are in the Church; if they are not removed, Christ will fight against the Church with His sword. He that overcometh in these temptations shall have the hidden manna, and a white stone inscribed with a new and secret name.

"*Pergamum.*"—Politically the city of Pergamum was at this time the most important in Asia for it was the seat of the Roman government and thereby receives in this epistle the title of Satan's throne, for the Roman Empire with its Cæsar worship is represented as the dominion of Satan in chapters xii and xiii. Historically the city is not so noteworthy as the others. Founded only in the fifth century it did not reach prominence till 282 B.C. when the kingdom of Pergamum was founded. In its rivalry with the Seleucid family it gained importance, till Antiochus the Great reduced it to such straits that it was obliged to apply to Rome for aid. In gratitude for their help its king Attalus at his death bequeathed the kingdom to the Romans in 133 B.C. and they established their capital there. It boasted of the first temple to a Roman Emperor in Asia and became doubly the throne of Satan thereby. Apart from this, its religion was, as in other towns of Asia Minor, a mixture of Asiatic Nature worship and the Greek cults. But the interesting aspect of its condition for us is the fact that here Christianity came into direct contact with the Emperor worship enforced by Roman power. There were those in the Church who would make a compromise with the world and comply with idolatrous customs, on the plea that they were only conventional, and there were others who suffered martyrdom rather than sully the purity of their faith. To the former belonged the sect of the Nicolaitans, to the latter the martyr Antipas. There is no doubt in this epistle as to which party has earned the commendation of Christ.

12. "*The two-edged sword.*"—The sword is the symbol of the ruler (Rom. xiii. 4) and is appropriate here, for Pergamum was the seat of the Roman Government. If the Romans set up their throne and their governor there, Christ is also there with the two-edged sword with which He fights against sin and falsehood (cp. verse 16).

13. "*Satan's throne.*"—There can be little doubt as to the meaning of this symbol. Pergamum, which was the seat of the Roman Empire, was also the seat of the Emperor worship, which began here as early as A.D. 29. It is therefore here depicted as the throne of Satan. Cp. chap. xii, xiii, xvii. The word used for "throne" in the Greek always signifies a seat of office or a chair of state. The Christians were surrounded by idolatry and Cæsar worship and if they did not conform they were liable to punishment and death.

"*Antipas.*"—There is nothing certain known about Antipas. We can gather from this passage that he resisted the authority of the Romans by

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast 14
there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught
Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel,
to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.
So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nico- 15
laitans in like manner.
Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will 16
make war against them with the sword of my mouth.

declining to worship the image of the Emperor and paid the penalty by his death.

"*Witness.*"—What is needed above all else in the midst of the opposition of the world is the witness of a good and pure life untainted by any compromise with heathenism in any form, and this was what Antipas had given and for this he laid down his life (1 Tim. vi. 13).

14. "*Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel.*"—Balaam was summoned by Balak to curse Israel (Num. xxii). But God would not allow him to curse them "for they are blessed." The reason for their blessedness was given by Balaam himself (Num. xxiii. 21), "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob." Nevertheless desirous of receiving his reward from Balak (2 Pet. ii. 15), Balaam persuaded Balak to induce the Israelites to forfeit their blessing by mingling in heathen rites: and he succeeded in his plan, and so a curse fell upon them (Num. xxv). He is therefore symbolical of a tempter, who definitely entices his victims to idolatry and impurity in order to get a reward from the world power, symbolized by Balak.

"*To eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication.*"—To this temptation of joining in idol feasts the early Christians were constantly subjected (cf. 1 Cor. viii. 10, x. 27, 28). It was difficult to join in a meal with a heathen acquaintance without doing so. The fornication implied is probably spiritual fornication "running after another God and deserting their own God," but there is always the fact to be remembered that wherever nature worship is practised fornication forms an integral part of it. This is well known in India. In the second century there were sects of Gnostics who openly preached the lawfulness of licentiousness.

15. "*Teaching of the Nicolaitans.*"—Practically the compromise with the world explained above. We may note the direction which the philosophic thought of heretics took concerning sin. The spirit, they said, is not affected by the deeds of the body. Therefore no bodily act can defile the spirit. Some therefore preached licentiousness, others practised asceticism. The Hindu doctrine of *maya*, the unreality of the world, leads to similar confusion of thought regarding sin. See verses 21 and 22 and notes, and Introduction, chap. v.

16. "*I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.*"—The Governor of the world will use His sword, with more effect than any Roman Governor can command. All the flimsy philosophy whereby man excuses his sin is torn to pieces by the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. "The glorified Christ is a warrior, who fights with the sharp sword of the Word" (Swete). Rev. xix. 13, 15; Eph. vi. 17.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.

17. "*Hidden manna.*"—Instead of the things offered to idols, Christ gives His servants the Bread of God which came down from heaven. The manna laid up in the ark, which did not become corrupt but remained for ever fresh under the mercy seat, was a symbol of Christ risen from the dead and seated on the throne of God, giving the true Bread to those who believe on Him (St. John vi. 32-35, Col. iii. 4) and who win the victory through Him.

"*A white stone and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.*"—The important thing in this promise is the new name; the symbol may be discussed after that has been explained. "Name" in the Scriptures symbolizes character and inner being revealed. Cp. Isaiah lxii. 2. 'Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.' These words are addressed to Jerusalem in her character as the Bride of Jehovah, and the reference is very appropriate here, for as the manna is given instead of the idol feast, so the new name conferred on the Church in her marriage with her lawful Lord is in contrast to the fornication of those who forsake their God. The name is the name of God conferred on the Church. Cp. Jer. xxxiii. 16 and xxiii. 6, where "the Lord our Righteousness" is the name given to the Branch and to Jerusalem which thus shares the character of "Righteous." The thought of the union with the Church's Lord is presented in two forms, the hidden manna and the new name which is conferred on her when she is born again and renewed in Him. She sings a new song (Rev. xiv. 3) and bears a new name in the new creation (xxi. 5).

The white stone on which the name is inscribed has presented great difficulties to interpreters. There is nothing with which it exactly corresponds. Some have sought the analogy in the stones of the High Priest's breastplate bearing the names of the children of Israel. Others in the white and black stones of the Urim and Thummim with which it has been supposed the priest learned the will of God. Others again have thought the reference to be to tokens given for admission to a feast and others to votes of acquittal in a trial. The problem has not been solved, but the main point is the purity (signified by the whiteness) of the sign given to the true follower of Christ, who does not run after another god or make a compromise with the world.

LESSONS OF THE EPISTLE TO PERGAMUM.

A lesson of the *authority* of Christ. All authority is given to Him in heaven and in earth. He rules even where Satan's throne is set up and the kingdoms of the world seem strongest.

A lesson of *purity* of life. There is to be no compromise with the world and we are not to try to find ease at the expense of principle, even though we may be surrounded by difficulties and though the most specious arguments may be urged for "liberality of thought and practice."

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These 18
things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of
fire, and his feet are like unto burnished brass:

I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and 19
patience, and that thy last works are more than the first.

But I have *this* against thee, that thou sufferest 20
[1]the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a pro-

[1] Many authorities, some ancient, read *thy wife*.

18-29. THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF THYATIRA, PERSEVERANCE REWARDED.

The Son of God, whose eyes are like a flame of fire and His feet like unto burnished brass, sees progress in the Church of Thyatira; but the false prophetess of the Nicolaitans is suffered to teach there. She and all her followers are to be punished with death, and the rest who have not partaken of her wickedness are to hold fast what they have. He that overcometh shall rule the nations with a rod of iron, as Christ rules, and shall receive the morning star.

"*Thyatira.*"—This was a town on the main trade route of Asia Minor.—It is not strongly situated and all its fortifications had to be made without the aid of nature. Seleucus founded it between 300 and 282 B.C. as part of his scheme for spreading Greek civilization. Later on it fell under the dominion of Pergamum. There seems to have been a large colony of Jews there. Up to the time of the Revelation it was indeed a trading city, but it had not reached the great importance it afterwards attained and was primarily a garrison town. It is interesting as the city of Lydia, the first convert made by St. Paul in Europe. She appears to have gone to Philippi to extend the trade of the cloth dyers. There was also a guild of bronze workers there and perhaps the "burnished brass" of the epistle was a special metal manufactured there.

"*The Son of God.*"—This is the only place in the Revelation where the title occurs, and it is used in reference to Psalm ii, which is quoted in verse 27, where the Son is promised the dominion over the nations. The nations are exhorted to "kiss the Son lest He be angry." Even now His wrath is kindled against some in the Church of Thyatira. Let them repent while there is time.

"*Eyes like a flame of fire.*"—As the fire searches the metal so the eyes of the Son of God search the hearts of men (verse 23).

"*Feet like unto burnished brass.*"—The feet which are to trample underfoot the nations (verse 27) are likened to the burnished brass manufactured in Thyatira.

19. "*Ministry.*"—Especially charity to the poor (Rom. xv. 25, 31).

"*The last to be more than the first.*"—As the city was expanding her trade and growing more prosperous, so she also was expanding her Christian work. This was as it should be, but her prosperity was leading her into a compromise with the world.

20. "*Sufferest.*"—The acquiescence is greater than in Pergamum, where it is said "thou *hast* them that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans."

"*Jezebel.*"—Probably a woman in the Church who was a leader among the Nicolaitans is intended. As Ahab did not oppose Jezebel, so the Church

phetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.

21 And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to repent of her fornication.

22 Behold, I do cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of [1]her works.

23 And I will kill her children with [2]death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works.

[1] Many ancient authorities read *their*.

[2] Or. *pestilence*.

had not opposed this woman, and she was doubtless forward in promoting what she thought was for the good of the Church, namely, a very easy compromise with heathen customs and a seeking for popularity with the world at the expense of the purity of her religion. It would appear that women were very influential in Phrygian society: and in the next century when Montanism arose in Phrygia, women were prominent among its leaders. The symbolical reference to Jezebel is of course to Ahab's Sidonian queen, who in order to maintain the alliance with Sidon, set herself deliberately to assimilate the worship of Israel to that of Sidon, by forcing on the Israelites idolatry and immorality and persecuting the worshippers of the one God. (1 Kings xviii. 4, 19, xix. 2, xxi. 25, xxii. 53).

"*Seduceth my servants.*"—St. John saw plainly the result of any compromise with idolatry. The end could only be corruption in the Church. The standard of heathenism is lower than that of Christ. Moreover the whole question had been settled years before by the Council at Jerusalem (Acts xv) whose decree he presently quotes. Who was this prophetess that she should know better than the Council of the Apostles led by the Holy Spirit?

21. "*I gave her time.*"—God allows evil to continue in order that men may repent (Gen. xv. 16, Rom. ii. 4).

22. "*I do cast her into a bed.*"—The bed here is the dining couch. The main question between the Nicolaitans and the Church was the attendance at club feasts, which were such a prominent feature of life in Greece and Asia. They were always connected in some way or other with idolatry. The punishment of this woman was that she should be placed upon a dining couch with her companions and sit down to a feast of tribulation.

Her works, i.e., deeds inspired by her teaching.

23. "*Her children.*"—Those who had listened to her teaching and become like her, as a child is like its mother. "The children of the Thyatiran Jezebel are doomed like those of Ahab." (2 Kings x. 7) Swete.

"*Death.*"—Probably pestilence.

"*All the churches shall know.*"—Isa. xlv. 6. "All flesh shall see" Isa. xl. 5, Exod. vii. 5.

"*I am he that searcheth the reins.*"—Ps. vii. 9, Jer. xvii. 10. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings." God could see the hidden

But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many 24
as have not this teaching, which know not the deep things of
Satan, as they say; I cast upon you none other burden.
Howbeit that which ye have, hold fast till I come. 25
And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto 26
the end, to him will I give authority over the nations:
And he shall rule them with a rod of [1]iron, 27
as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers;
as I also have received of my Father:

[1] Or. *iron*; *as vessels of the potter, are they broken.*

unfaithfulness which prompted this compromise with the world, though it was concealed by specious arguments.

"*According to his work.*"—Matt. xvi. 27.

24. "*The deep things of Satan.*"—The Apostolic rule was perfectly clear and simple, to abstain from fornication and from things offered to idols. The Gnostics of later times used to speak of the "deep things of the Depth," and some even went so far as to put Satan in the place of God. Eclectic systems, whether ancient or modern, always try to attract their followers by an esoteric teaching, which is kept from the outside world. There are deep things of God too (1 Cor. ii. 10), but it is only by the Spirit of God that they can be searched and they are open to all who have the Spirit.

"*None other burden.*"—Acts xv. 28. "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication."

26. "*My works.*"—Opposed to "her works" in verse 22.

27. "*He shall rule them with a rod of iron.*"—It was not likely that the city of Thyatira would ever rule any kingdom with a rod of iron, and it did not seem very probable that the weak Church torn by dissension would wield the rod of the ruler, but this is to be the reward of her perseverance in the works of Christ. As the stone which the builders rejected became the head of the corner, so the Church which was weak is to become the ruler. Cp. Psalm ii. 8, 9. 'Ask of me and I will give to thee the nations for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.'

"*Rule.*"—The word means "shall be their shepherd." A shepherd's duty is to feed his flock and to restrain them from dangerous places and thus to rule them.

"*Rod of iron.*"—A staff shod with iron. It is here the sceptre of the Good Shepherd, our King (St. Matt. xxv. 31). The Son of Man seated on the throne of His glory judges the nations of the world and divides them as a shepherd does his flock. This dominion He will share with His faithful people (St. Luke xix. 15, etc.). "Historically the promise fulfils itself in the Church's influence upon the world; no other voluntary society can be compared with her as a factor in the shaping of national character and life; and the individual disciple in proportion as he is loyal, bears his share in the subjection of the world to Christ" (Swete). Cp. Rom. xv. 18. 'Christ wrought through me for the obedience of the Gentiles.'

28 And I will give him the morning star. [churches.
29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the

This comment is worth the attention of all in India or elsewhere who have any patriotic feeling or aspire to serve their country. "The new order must be preceded by the breaking up of the old, but the purpose of the potter is to reconstruct; out of the fragments of the old life there will rise under the hand of Christ and of the Church new and better types of social and national organization." There can be no higher reward of victory than to be allowed to help Christ in the work of reconstruction in one's motherland, but it is the reward of victory over sin, and not a right to be snatched by any and every hand.

28. "*The Morning star.*"—This is Christ Himself (Rev. xxii. 16; cp. 2 Pet. i. 19). "Until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." Without such guidance as the star gives, how could His servants succeed in their work of ruling? As a star guided the wise men of the East to Christ, so the Morning star will guide them to the perfect day (Prov. iv. 18). The symbolism is wonderfully complete. The churches are candlesticks, their angels are stars, their Lord is the Morning star.

LESSONS OF THE CHURCH OF THYATIRA.

A lesson of the danger of *paltering with the world* and trying to be wiser than the Spirit of God.

A lesson of *perseverance rewarded and weakness made strong.*—The church which goes on steadily will be rewarded with wider opportunities of service and responsibility.

A lesson of the *joy and privilege of uniting with Christ* in the re-construction of the world, breaking up the old and worn out society and fashioning it anew for the King of Kings.

III. 1—6. EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF SARDIS, THE DEAD CITY.

He that hath the seven Spirits and the seven stars finds the Church of Sardis dead, though living in name: if it does not establish itself Christ will come as a thief; there are only a few who have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with Christ in white. He that overcometh shall not have his name blotted out of the Book of Life.

Sardis was one of the most important cities of the ancient world. It was long the capital of Lydia and almost wholly Asiatic in population. Thus it became the representative of Asia in all the contests between Asia and Europe and therefore the great enemy of the Greek colonies in Asia Minor. Founded some time before 1200 B.C. it owed its pre-eminence to its impregnable position and to its trade. It thus came in contact with European thought but it was not itself Europeanized. Rather it took what it needed of Western civilization and absorbed and changed it to suit its own needs. It was here that the wealthy king Crœsus, whose riches are still proverbial, reigned in the sixth century before Christ, and it was he who, misled by the oracle which told him that in warring against Cyrus he should destroy a mighty empire, lost his dominion and destroyed not his enemy's empire, as he had hoped, but his own. Once again in the third century before Christ it was captured by Antiochus the Great. Its greatness disappeared after its absorption into the Roman Empire and in A.D. 17 it was laid waste by an earthquake. The liberality of the Emperor Tiberius gave it the means of recovery, but at the time St. John

III. And to the angel of the Church in Sardis write; These 1
things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the
seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that
thou livest, and thou art dead.

Be thou watchful, and stablish the things that 2
remain, which were ready to die: for I have
[1]found no works of thine fulfilled before my God.

1 Many ancient authorities read *not found thy works.*

wrote, it was a city whose greatness lay in its past glory, and there was no great future before it. To this fall the character of its worship had in a measure contributed. It was the home of Asiatic Nature worship. Its object of adoration was the life principle, which continues to manifest itself in the world in spite of the death of individuals, a worship not dissimilar to the Shaivite cult of India. This worship was a mixture of philosophy and obscenity, but inasmuch as it lacked the idea of personality in either the worshipper or the deity, it contained no incentive to effort or struggle towards higher things, and the result was apparent in the decay of the Sardian kingdom and in the deadness which pervaded even its Christianity, in which no works were fulfilled before God.

1. "*He that hath the seven Spirits.*"—Great truths and suitable to the Sardian trend of thought are contained in this phrase. Nature, which the Sardians worshipped, is not in itself the true source of life. This is rather the Spirit of God manifesting Himself in the world. He alone can give life to this dead Church and restore its fallen glories (Cp. Rev. v. 6, Eph. iv. 7).

"*Seven stars.*"—Corresponding to the candlestick of the Church, whose light was so dim, is the star in the hand of Christ. As He has the source of life, the Spirit of God, He has also the heavenly light, the star. Let the Church come to Him for life and light, for He is the Light of the world.

"*A name that thou livest and thou art dead.*"—Politically the name of Sardis the ancient capital of Crœsus was still famous, but its power was gone and its life was simply in the past. Spiritually, too, it had the name of a Church but it had lost all life. It had no communion with Christ the fountain of life (Eph. ii. 5). It had indeed a form of godliness, but denied the power thereof (2 Tim. iii. 5, Eph. v. 14). There is no death more terrible than formality posing as Christianity, a Church organization without the power of the Spirit, an evangelistic society without the love for those for whom Christ died.

2. "*Be watchful therefore and stablish the things that remain, that were ready to die.*"—Twice in its history had the town of Sardis been taken because it was not watching. It was founded on an almost inaccessible rock, but a bold climber might at night, if no one were watching, scale the height and open the gates. Twice the feat had been accomplished and Sardis had fallen. Spiritually the same thing was about to happen, and they must watch to prayer (St. Matt. xxvi. 40, 41). A Church surrounded by paganism is particularly liable to relax its efforts and to lower its standard, especially when it comes in contact with any form of Pantheism; for the denial of the personality of God is a removal of the standard of right and wrong. It is this that paralyses India and it was this that destroyed the Church of Sardis.

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep *it* and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

4 But thou hast a few names in Sardis which did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.

"*Stablish.*"—Acts xviii. 23, Rom. i. 11, 1 Thess. iii. 13, 2 Thess. ii. 17, 1 Pet. v. 10. "Stablishing" is a most necessary part of Church life. We have given only a few of the passages where its necessity is insisted on in the New Testament. In the midst of a non-Christian population it is a condition of life itself; for where the idea of admission to the Christian Church is at all coloured by the caste idea, there is too often the thought that once the Christian has been admitted by baptism nothing more remains to be done, and Christians sink into indifference and lower their standard. The stablishing of those who are in the Church is not less important than the extension of Christ's kingdom.

"*I have found no works of thine fulfilled.*"—As the old glories of the kingdom of Crœsus had not been fulfilled and had now disappeared, so the glorious promise of the Church's early days had not been fulfilled. Christ came seeking fruit and found none (St. Luke xiii. 7). "The Lord contemplates the works prepared and appointed in the providence of God for the faithful man to do as a definite sphere (Eph. ii. 10) which it was his duty and his calling to have fulfilled" (Trench). Cp. St. Paul's desire for the Colossian Church (Col. i. 22-25). "To present you holy and without blemish and unreprovable before him (cp. "before my God" in this verse); if so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast and not moved away from theh ope of the gospel, which ye heard and which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister."

3. "*Remember therefore how thou hast received.*"—Politically the old memories of the town of Sardis were all it had left now. To remember its departed glory could not bring it back to the city, but in the Church such a memory would serve as a stimulus to them to bring back the first enthusiasm and effort.

"*I will come as a thief.*"—I.e., unexpectedly. The coming of the thief is not looked for. Even as the enemy had come twice by night and captured their town, so Christ will come as a thief on the sleeping Church and judge it (Cp. Psalm lxxiii. 19, 20; St. Luke xii. 39, 40; Rev. xvi. 15).

4. "*Names.*"—They boasted of great names in the past. But the true greatness of a name is that it should be written in heaven (St. John x. 3). 'He calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out.'

"*Did not defile their garments.*"—They had not mingled with the heathen and learned their works. The sin of Sardis was this, that living in the midst of heathen they had accommodated their standard to the heathen level, and had sunk into indifference which was likely to become death. There were, however, a few who had retained the purity of their life and faith. The metaphor of the Christian "garment" is common (Cp. Jude 23). "Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." (Gal. iii. 27), "As many as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." A special gar-

He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white gar- 5
ments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my father and before his angels.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to 6
the churches.

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These 7

ment is everywhere a claim to a special character (e.g., the ochre coloured garments of *sadhus*). The Christian garment is, however, a spiritual one, including promises made at baptism. Falseness to our profession defiles it.

"*In white.*"—As victors (Rev. vi. 2) and as pure (Rev. vii. 9, Dan. xii. 10).

"*They shall walk with me in white.*"—Christ walks among the Churches and He goes before His sheep. Wherever His faithful ones have to go, He will be with them; and wherever He goes, He will take them with Him.

5. "*White garments.*"—Rev. xix. 8, 1 Cor. xv. 42-45. The Resurrection life is a glorious, victorious and joyous change, and it is that which is here symbolized by the white garments of glory, victory and joy.

"*I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life.*"—All Greek and Roman cities had lists of citizens, just as in these days there are lists of those entitled to vote on Municipalities. Similarly a spiritual register of Life is mentioned in the Bible in several passages. Cp. Exod. xxxii. 32, Dan. xii. 1, St. Luke x. 20, Phil. iv. 3, and in Revelation xiii. 8, xx. 15, xxi. 27. The thought is one of comfort and security to God's servants, even though they may be, as in Sardis, only a little company of 'few names' in the midst of a large heathen population.

"*I will confess his name.*"—St. Matt. x. 32, St. Luke xii. 8, Heb. ii. 11. 'He is not ashamed to call them brethren.'

LESSONS FROM THE CHURCH OF SARDIS.

A warning against *lowering our standard* of right and of Christianity and accommodating it to the world around us. The result will be deadness.

A lesson of *watchfulness*. Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. Watch, for ye know not what hour the Son of Man cometh.

A lesson of *the love of Christ*. He singles out His own even in a dead Church and leads them in their walk with Him in this world and in heaven.

III. 7-13. EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA, THE MISSIONARY CITY.

He that is holy, He that is true, Who has the key of David, has set before the Church of Philadelphia an open door; though she has but little power, the Church has kept the word and has successfully withstood the attacks of the false Jews, who shall be brought under her feet. Christ will keep her from the hour of temptation and will set him that overcometh as a pillar in His temple, whence he shall go no more out and will give him His new name, the name of the New Jerusalem.

7. *Philadelphia.*—Unlike Sardis, Philadelphia was a modern town, for it was founded by Attalus I as late as 159-138 B.C. The object of its

things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and none shall shut, and that shutteth, and none openeth:

8 I know thy works (behold, I have [1]set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that

[1] Gr. *given.*

foundation was not to protect a frontier, but to spread Greek manners and civilization in Lydia and Phrygia. It has been called by Ramsay "the apostle of Hellenism (Greek civilization) in an Oriental land." Its history up to the time of the Revelation comprises little but disaster caused by earthquake. The great earthquake of A.D. 17 which laid Sardis low, also destroyed Philadelphia and so terrified were its inhabitants that, but for the fact of the situation of their city on the great high road of Asia, they would have completely abandoned it. As it was, the majority left it and lived outside. In spite of help from the Imperial Exchequer the city was much reduced by its misfortunes and had but little strength. It was an ardent worshipper of the Emperor and even changed its name in his honour. After the date of the Revelation it recovered its prosperity, but that is a circumstance outside our present consideration.

The name Philadelphia, given to commemorate its founder Attalus Philadelphus, means "brotherly love" and is not inappropriate to a Missionary City.

"*He that is holy, he that is true.*"—'Holy' means "separate" and so "consecrated and devoted" to the service of God. God is holy in that He is separate from all defilement; His people are holy (saints) in that they are devoted to His service and separate from defilement.

"True" means "real," "absolute." That which answers to its description and is in no particular false is in this sense "true." Thus those who say they are Jews and are not, are its exact opposite (1 Thess. i. 9, St. John i. 9, vi. 32, xv. 1, xvii. 3). St. John uses the word some twenty-two times. It is used in the Creed, of the eternal Son, "Very God of Very God" and means that He is all that He claims to be, fulfilling the ideals which He holds forth and the hopes which He inspires.

"*He that hath the key of David, he that openeth and none shall shut, and that shutteth and none openeth.*"—(Isaiah xxii. 22), "The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder and he shall open and none shall shut and he shall shut and none shall open." The reference is to Eliakim the new vizier of King Hezekiah who was to replace Shebna, dismissed for unfaithfulness and especially for relying on Egypt in the crisis of the Assyrian invasion and for opposing the policy of faith in God advocated by Isaiah. All the administration of the kingdom was to be entrusted to Eliakim. Similarly Christ has all authority in the world and He exercises His power and delegates it to His Church also (St. Matt. xvi. 19). David, the king of the chosen people, is the type of the King Christ, and the special point here is that though the Jewish party claimed authority to open and shut, to cast out and to retain in the Church (verse 9) yet it is not in their hands, but rather in the hands of Christ that this power really lies.

8. "*A door opened.*"—A metaphor for opportunity for evangelization. (Acts xiv. 27), "A door of faith opened to the Gentiles." (1 Cor. xvi. 9) "A great door and effectual is opened unto me" (2 Cor. ii. 12, Col. iv. 3)

thou hast a little power and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name.

Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 9

Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of [1]trial, that *hour* which is to come upon the whole [2]world, to [3]try them that dwell upon the earth. 10

1 Or, *temptation.*
2 Gr. *inhabited earth.*
3 Or, *tempt.*

"*That thou hast a little power.*"—(Cp. ii. 9, and note.) The city had, as we have seen, been destroyed by earthquake. The church was bitterly opposed by the Jews, who were numerous and influential. But it is often the poorer and less influential who are most zealous about the preaching of the Kingdom of Christ. It is not by might nor by power that success is achieved, but by the Spirit of God. Christ measures rather the opportunity than the strength, for His strength is made perfect in weakness.

9. "*I will give.*"—I will cause them to come and submit themselves.

"*Synagogue of Satan.*"—(Rev. ii. 9, and note.) The early Church was much troubled by Jews, who claimed that there could be no salvation except through the Law of Moses and circumcision. They were not Jews inwardly, but only so in appearance.

"*Worship.*"—(Isaiah xlv. 14, xlix. 23, lx. 14.) The cowering of the defeated enemy is here depicted. The contrast is between their present pride and their abject submission (cp. 1 Cor. xiv. 25.)

"*To know that I have loved thee.*"—The Lord decides the question between the Jews and the Church. The former are a synagogue of Satan; the latter He loves.

10. "*The word of my patience.*"—Patience means endurance and continuance in effort under great difficulties. The phrase "the word of my patience" means not only that patience is the virtue which Christ taught, but that it is the centre of all His work and life, and He shewed it in all its beauty (2 Thess. iii. 5). He reversed the ideals of men. The hero in men's eyes is the mighty conqueror crushing his foes. Christ shewed by His life and word, that true heroism lies in patience and suffering and perseverance (St. Matt. v. 38-48, Heb. xii. 1, 2). So the "patience of the saints" (Rev. xiii. 10, and xiv. 12) is their "Imitation of Christ."

"*I will keep thee from the hour of trial.*"—As the Philadelphians lived in terror of another earthquake, which should again lay waste their city, so they are warned that trial will come upon the whole earth, the great tribulation which is to precede the Coming of Christ and which has its counterpart in the many trials that come from time to time to warn men. Those who keep the word of His patience and learn its lessons do not need the sharper trial and are kept from it (St. Luke xxi. 36).

"*Them that dwell upon the earth.*"—Always used of "the pagan world or the world contrasted with the heavenly state" (Swete) vi. 10, viii. 13, xi. 10, xiii. 8, 14, xvii. 8.

11 I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown.

12 He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name.

1 Or, sanctuary: and so throughout this book.

"*No one take thy crown.*"—He who does not keep that which has been committed to him loses his reward at the great Day of Judgment (St. Luke xix. 24). The Jews forfeited their trust and it was given to the Gentile Church; let the Gentile Church hold fast its trust, lest like the Jews it lose both trust and crown.

12. "*A pillar and he shall go no more out.*"—He that overcomes shall be a pillar in the house of God, steadfast for ever, and he shall no more have to go out from the Presence of God. In the symbol we see a sign of the stability of the building supported by pillars and of the permanence of the pillar. A character fixed by final victory can never again fall but remains for ever pure. Life after death is, for the Christian, no endless cycle, but a character growing more and more perfect in the Presence of God. For the metaphor, cp. Prov. ix. 1. 'Wisdom hath builded an house and hath hewn out seven pillars' (Gal. ii. 9, 1 Tim. iii. 15).

"*The name of my God and the name of the city of my God and mine own new name.*"—On each pillar are inscribed three names or three aspects of the same name.

The writing of the name of God implies consecration to God (Isaiah xliv. 5, Num. vi. 27). When the High Priest blessed Israel he put upon them the name of God.

The name of the new Jerusalem is given in Jer. xxxiii. 16. Cp. Rev. xxi. 2, Heb. xii. 22. It is a common honour to confer the freedom of a city upon a man who has benefited his country. The "freedom" of the new Jerusalem confers all the privileges which belong to those who dwell therein. Cp. Phil. iii. 20. 'Our citizenship is in heaven.'

"*My new name.*"—"Name" in the Scriptures means character. The new name of Christ is His new character as the risen and ascended Son of Man, Who in heaven pleads for us and Who will share His throne with us. Thus the phrase means 'I will make him to share in the glorious manifestation of My own nature—to share My character and become fully like Myself' (1 John iii. 1, 2).

"*Which cometh down out of heaven from my God.*"—The Philadelphian Christians were excommunicated by the Jews; God would make them citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 2, 10). The saints whose life is hid with Christ in God are inhabitants of the heavenly city and when Christ is revealed they shall be revealed with Him.

LESSONS OF THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA.

A lesson of *effort in weakness*. The door is opened by Christ and none can shut it: so in His strength the Church can do her part in His work though she may be weak.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to 13
the churches.

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write; These 14
things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God:

A lesson of *faith*. Though we have no continuing city here, *there* is the house of God whose pillars go no more out.

14-22. EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA, THE LUKEWARM CITY.

"The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, finds the Church of Laodicea neither hot nor cold, and she shall be rejected. She boasts of her wealth but she is poor. Let her buy from Christ what she needs before it is too late. He stands at the door and if any man will admit Him He will come in and sup with him. Those who overcome shall share the throne of Jesus as He also overcame and shares His Father's throne.

14. "*Laodicea.*"—Laodicea, another modern city, was founded by Antiochus II (261-246 B.C.) It was placed as a guard on the great road in the Meander Valley. It is close to Hierapolis and Colosse and had felt the influence of St. Paul's teaching, though he had never visited it (Col. ii. 1, iv. 13). It was a great trading centre, its chief product being fine black wool. There was also a famous school of medicine close to it, connected with the Phrygian worship of Asklepius, the god of healing, who had displaced the Phrygian god Men. The city was wholly given up to trading and for this purpose formed alliances with neighbouring cities. It does not seem to have been prominent in any other way. Its influence on the surrounding country was commercial and it was merely its convenience as a depot for the distribution of Phrygian wares that made it important. Such a city, giving, as it did, harbour to people of every land who came to trade, would grow exceedingly wealthy, but would not have a strong character of its own; owing to the necessities of its business it received all and sundry, and consequently suffered in character until it became the lukewarm city here described.

It is worth while to notice the position of this Epistle after that of Philadelphia, the missionary Church. After a time of great zeal and self-denial it often happens that while the machinery of charity and evangelization remains, the spirit and love disappear, and while the church prides itself on its work it is in reality dead and poor. This was the case with Laodicea.

"*The Amen.*"—The names which Christ chooses in this Epistle have reference, as usual, to the character of the Church. It is lukewarm and faithless; so He is the Amen, whose Character and Nature are a guarantee for His Truth. "Amen" is the word by which He confirms so many of His sayings and is translated "Verily, verily." The Church may be wavering and compromising with the world, but her Master is ever faithful and true.

"*Faithful and True Witness.*"—Cp. i. 5 and note.

"*The beginning of the creation of God.*"—The beginning of the creation means its first cause, not the first created being. That sense would be

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would
thou wert cold or hot.
16 So because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold not hot, I
will spew thee out of my mouth.
17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and
have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the
wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked:

repugnant to all the teaching of the New Testament concerning Christ. There are many instances of this active meaning of "beginning." Satan is called in the Gospel of Nicodemus "the beginning of death, i.e., the cause of death." In another work God is called "the cause and beginning of all things" (Trench). Christ calls Himself "the beginning" in Rev. xxi. 6 (cp. Col. i. 15). St. John says in his Gospel that "all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that hath been made." The sense here is, however, rather the beginning of the New Creation. He who through the Holy Spirit re-creates man, is in a special sense the "Beginning of the creation of God," for He is its Author, its Regenerator and its Ruler. The title is appropriate here, for the Laodicean Church had fallen into a state near to spiritual death, from which only her Creator could rouse her.

15. "*Neither hot nor cold.*"—The easy compromise of a city which was only concerned in money-making and trade and did not care about the private opinions of its merchants so long as its trade prospered, had found its way also into the Church. It is too indifferent to be hostile or heretical.

"*I would thou wert cold or hot.*"—One who is cold, who opposes the truth, shews more earnestness than one who is indifferent. The best state is fervour (Rom. xii. 11) and the next most hopeful stage is opposition. Indifference is the most hopeless.

16. "*I will spew thee out of my mouth.*"—A strong expression of disgust suggested by the effect of lukewarm water. The lukewarm state must end in rejection by Christ.

17. "*Because thou sayest, I am rich.*"—The church of Laodicea being wealthy and having a business-like organization without any excess of zeal or impropriety, prides itself on its wealth. It is the same now. A church may have an elaborate organization, good societies, and all the paraphernalia of religion and may publish most self-congratulatory reports with carefully worked out statistics to shew its progress, and yet at the same time it may lack all real religion and love for Christ, as Laodicea did. Cp. St. Luke xii. 21, St. Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16, 1 Cor. iv. 8 where St. Paul derides such pretensions. "Already ye are filled, already ye are become rich, ye have reigned without us."

"*The wretched one.*"—The word in Greek is used with absolute contempt, of mean and dishonourable men. It is explained by the words that follow.

"*Miserable and poor and blind and naked.*"—The picture is of a beggar, blind and barely covered by his rags. The Church claims to be rich, she is a beggar. Cp. Isaiah xlvii. 8. 9, St. John ix. 41.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou 18
mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest
clothe thyself, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness is not made
manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest
see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous there- 19
fore, and repent.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my 20

18. "*I counsel thee to buy of me.*"—Let the merchant city think of buying from the Heavenly Merchant things which she needs for her spiritual destitution,—gold, white robes and eyesalve.

"*Gold.*"—Laodicea was a great banking city and travellers brought their bills of exchange to be cashed there, but she had not the true gold of *faith* which St. James mentions (ii. 5). "Rich in faith." (1 Pet. i. 7), "The trial of your faith being much more precious than gold."

"*White raiment.*"—The beautiful black glossy garments which were Laodicea's finest manufacture were of no avail to cover her spiritual nakedness. She must get the white raiment of *holiness* from Christ Who alone can give it (Zech. iii. 5, St. Luke xv. 22, Rev. v. 11, xix. 8. "The fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints)" Cp. iii. 4, 5.

"*Shame.*"—In the prophets apostasy from God is frequently spoken of under this metaphor (Ezek. xvi. 15, 16, Jer. xiii. 27). It is used specially in reference to idolatry with which impurity is so often connected.

"*Eyesalve.*"—As has been mentioned above there was a great medical school connected with Laodicea and the Phrygian eyesalve was famous. But just as with her gold and her black raiment, Laodicea had no true eyesalve for her spiritual blindness. The *anointing of the Holy Spirit* Who teaches all things and reproves the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment (St. John xvi. 8-11) is that which alone can give sight to the spiritually blind.

19. "*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.*"—It is beautiful to see how these most tender words are addressed to this backsliding Church in whose praise not a single word has yet been said (Prov. iii. 12). The same words are quoted in Heb. xii. 5-13. Chastening, though at the time it is grievous, is a sign that the Father loves His son, and has hope that he will mend his ways. Where there is no chastening, there is no true sonship.

"*Be zealous.*"—This was the exhortation specially needed by this lukewarm compromising Church.

20. "*Behold I stand at the door and knock.*"—The picture presented by this wonderful saying is perhaps the most beautiful in the whole New Testament. Christ the King Who has "sat down with the Father in His throne," Who calls all His disciples to feast with Him, stands *outside* the Church which, because of its lukewarm and unloving character, is nigh to be rejected, and He patiently knocks and asks for admittance and promises that He will come in and share its hospitality and Himself also provide the Feast (*he with Me*). But it is a picture of warning too. The heart of the professing Christian which should be the temple of the Holy Spirit is closed to the Heavenly Guest. He stands at the door and He

voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

will suddenly come to judgment (St. Matt. xxiv. 33, St. James v. 9). There may come a time when it shall be the turn of the Laodicean Church to stand outside and to say "Lord, Lord open to us," and then He may have to say "I never knew you; depart, ye workers of iniquity."

The scene presented by these words has been the subject of many a beautiful picture and of many a striking poem.

"*If any man hear.*" St. Luke xii. 36, St. John xiv. 23, Eph. iii. 17.

21. "*To sit with me in my throne.*"—St. Matt. xix. 28, St. Luke xxii. 29. At the last Supper Christ covenanted to His followers a kingdom. To each one who will open his heart and sup with the King of Kings He now promises a share in His kingdom (cp. St. Matt. x. 41). "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward." So here he that receiveth a King in the name of a King shall receive the King's reward.

"*I also overcame.*"—St. John xvi. 33 "I have overcome the world." (I John v. 4). Christ won the victory, when He rose from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. (Cp. Psalm cx. 1), "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."—(Eph. i. 20-22, Heb. i. 3).

22. "*The Churches.*"—The message is not only to the individual Churches here addressed, but to all the Churches which are included in the Body of Christ.

LESSONS OF THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA.

A lesson of *the danger of compromise* with the world. The Church of Laodicea prided itself on its liberality and on the wealth of its congregation; but it was poor and wretched and naked.

A lesson of *the uselessness of organization* unless it be full of the Spirit of God.

A call to *open our hearts* to the King who is knocking and asking for admittance, while there is time and before that hour comes when we shall be outside and knock in vain for admittance to His wedding feast.

IV. VISION OF THE THRONE OF GOD, THE CREATOR AND THE RULER.

St. John is summoned by the voice which he heard in his first vision, to heaven, where he sees the throne of God, as pictured by the prophets of the Old Testament. Four and twenty elders are seated round it; the seven Spirits of God shine before it; the cherubim ceaselessly praise the Lord; and the four and twenty elders give thanks for creation.

IV. After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in 1
heaven, and the first voice which I heard, *a voice*
as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying,
Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things
which must [1] come to pass hereafter.

1 Or, *come to pass. After these things straightway, etc.*

Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a 2
throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne;

And he that sat *was* to look upon like a jasper stone and a 3
sardius: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, like
an emerald to look upon.

1. In the first three chapters, we have been shewn the vision of Christ walking in the midst of the Churches and we have seen their weaknesses and shortcomings and have heard the echoes of the great struggle between God and Satan, Christ and Antichrist, which is presently to be described. But at the outset it is well for the Church to be reminded that though the enemy may rage, there is One sitting in the heavens against whom earthly might is of no avail. The vision of the Lord in heaven, seated on His throne, as He had been seen by Isaiah, opens this section of the Revelation; and throughout (iv-xi) the manifestation of the power and purposes of God is made, before we see the Dragon or the Antichrist in their might.

"*A door opened.*" —A door of revelation as in Ezek. i. 1, St. John i. 51. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall see the heaven opened, and angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." We have had also in iii. 8 a door of opportunity and in iii. 20 the door of the heart.

"*The first voice.*"—Chap. i. 10. As St. John was summoned by the Lord to hear the messages to the seven Churches, so he is now summoned to see the revelation of the things, which must be hereafter.

2. "*Straightway I was in the Spirit.*"—Cp. i. 10 and note. The ecstatic state in which he had seen the vision of Christ is renewed in greater force: or perhaps it had been suspended during the delivery to him of the messages to the seven Churches.

"*A throne set.*"—The throne symbolizes God's sovereign power over all things (Dan. vii. 9, Isaiah vi. 1). In contrast to the outcaste leper Uzziah Isaiah was shewn the throne of the Lord. In contrast to the Cæsar usurping the place of Christ, the Apostle sees the eternal throne of the Creator and Ruler of all.

3. "*He that sat.*"—No form is described. The form of the Son of Man has been fully described in the first chapter.

"*Jasper stone and a sardius.*"—The jewels signify heavenly glory in earthly symbols of beauty and worth (Exod. xxviii. 17, 18). Both these stones were employed in the breastplate of the High Priest. The jasper is a translucent stone of different colours, most often yellow. The sardius is a red stone. In Rev. xxi. 11 the jasper is like crystal.

"*Rainbow.*"—Ezek. i. 28. "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about." The rainbow which was the sign of God's first covenant made with man in the time of Noah will always convey to our thoughts God's

4 And round about the throne *were* four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones *I saw* four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold.

5 And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God;

love and mercy in saving from death (Gen. ix. 12, 13). "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations; I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." In the next chapter we see how God's compassion has been manifested to men. The Lamb as He had been slain, the eternal proof of the mercy of God, appears.

"*Emerald.*"—A green stone.

4. "*Four and twenty thrones.*"—As in a darbar princes of a certain rank have the right to occupy seats, so four and twenty elders are seated round the throne of God. It is a fulfilment of the many promises that Christ makes to His people that they shall share His kingdom.

"*Four and twenty elders.*"—They are representatives of the Church. We cannot be absolutely certain why twenty-four are mentioned. Perhaps the double twelve refers to the Church of the Old Testament (twelve tribes) and the Church of the New represented by twelve apostles. This is the more probable because in the New Jerusalem the foundations are inscribed with the names of the twelve Apostles and the gates with the names of the twelve tribes; and so round the throne of God are seated twenty-four men, to see His glory and to sing His praises (Isaiah xxiv. 23). "The Lord God shall reign .... before his ancients gloriously." Beyond the fact that they represent the Church, pre-Christian and Christian, we cannot guess who the individual elders are. They are symbolical, not individual men.

"*White garments.*"—Chap. iii. 5, 18, vi. 11. They have been purified and made white and they have been made partakers of the joys of the resurrection.

"*Crowns of gold.*"—Not only do they share the life but the reward of the victory of Christ, symbolized by these crowns (ii, 10 and note). The gold may symbolize the preciousness of the reward.

5. "*Out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders.*"—Exod. xix. 16. "And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, ... and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud." As these manifestations of power preceded the giving of the Law of Moses, so they now precede the giving of the Revelation. So also Ezek. i. 13. A thunderstorm is a favourite picture of the power of God in the Psalms and other Old Testament writings (cp. Psalm xxix). The "voice of God" is the Hebrew expression for the thunder.

"*Seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.*"—Cp. chap. i. 4 and iii. 1 and notes. The fire may represent the fire of love and of judgment mingled.

And before the throne, as it were a glassy sea like unto 6
crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the
throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind.
And the first creature *was* like a lion, and the second like a 7
calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the
fourth creature *was* like a flying eagle.

6. "*Glassy sea.*"—"There was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness" (Ezek. i. 22, 26). This sea is not only a glorious vision among the splendours of heaven, it is prepared for those who get the victory, who stand upon (or by) it singing the song of Moses and the Lamb (xv. 2). In front of Solomon's temple was a sea of brass (1 Kings vii. 23), which may have suggested the legend of the Quran, concerning the sea of glass seen by the Queen of Sheba. "The sea may have symbolized to the Apostle the distance between himself (though standing even at the door of heaven) and the throne of God" (Swete). It should not be forgotten that the blue, transparent Mediterranean Sea melting away into the blue heavens was a sight continually before the eyes of St. John as he wrote the Revelation. The sea is constantly mentioned in this book.

"*Four living creatures.*"—Fully described in Ezek. i. 5-22 and x. They there appear to represent the chariot of the Lord (Ps. xviii. 10 and lxxx. 1). The cherubim are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament (Gen. iii. 24 and elsewhere). They were depicted in both the tabernacle and the temple, and in early days in Christian churches. In the year 1907 a Coptic chapel was discovered not far from Cairo, on the walls of which figures of the cherubim were painted. They were generally associated with the four evangelists, but there is no scriptural warrant for this, and also no agreement as to which of the forms should be assigned to each evangelist. If the elders represent the Church, the four living creatures would seem to represent Creation (see on verse 7).

"*Full of eyes.*"—Cp. Zech. iii. 9, iv. 10 in addition to the other passages quoted above. The thought symbolized seems to be that of ever ready service (Psalm cxxiii. 2).

7. "*A lion . . a calf . . . a man . . a flying eagle.*"—Before considering any symbolical meaning of these figures, they should be considered as representing Creation. The lion is the most terrible of beasts (Micah v. 8) and is used as a symbol of a king (Prov. xix. 12, Ezek. xix. 1-9). The ox, especially the wild ox of Palestine, is a symbol of strength (Prov. xiv. 4). It is also the chief sacrificial animal. Man is the chief work of God, the ruler of all Creation (Prov. xx. 27, Gen. i. 26). The eagle is noted for its swiftness (2 Sam. i. 23, Isaiah xl. 31). Creation is therefore represented as serving God by its representatives in dominion and in strength, and in activity.

The four cherubim are associated with the opening of the first four seals in chapter vi. In Genesis they guard the way of the tree of life, to prevent any unauthorized approach to it. In Ezekiel one of them gave fire from the altar to the man clothed in linen who executed the judgment of God upon the wicked (Ezek. ix. x). They seem therefore

8 And the four living creatures, having each of them six wings,
are full of eyes round about and within: and
they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy,
holy, holy, *is* the Lord God, the Almighty, which
was and which is and [1]which is to come.

1 Or, *which cometh.*

9 And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour
and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to
him that liveth [2]for ever and ever,

2 Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

10 The four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that
sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth [2]for ever
and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory
and the honour and the power: for thou didst create all things,
and because of thy will they were, and were created.

in a special way to be God's ministers in His dealings with man and in His judgments.

8. "*Six wings.*"—So Isaiah vi. 2. "With twain he covered his face and with twain he covered his feet and with twain he did fly." The wings perhaps symbolize the activities of Creation, as the eyes symbolize its watchful service.

"*Holy, holy, holy.*"—Isaiah vi. 3. The three-fold ascription of holiness appears to have reference to the Triune Nature of God. The word "holy" expresses the highest conception of Deity (iii. 7, note). To Isaiah it at once suggested the uncleanness of himself and his people. Cp. Davidson's Theology of Old Testament, p. 155.

"*Which was, etc.*"—See i. 4, note.

We have thus the thought which appears in the Old Testament in such passages as Psalm civ, that all Creation by fulfilling the purpose for which God created it, is ceaselessly praising Him. This is a far nobler thought than the pantheistic idea that the universe itself is God.

9. "*When the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks.*" With the praise of Creation is to be joined always the praise of the Church, represented by the four and twenty elders.

"*Glory and honour.*"—Psalm xxix. 1, 2. "Give unto the Lord glory and strength." "While glory and honour have regard to the Divine perfections, thanks refers to the Divine gifts in creation and redemption" (Swete).

"*To him that liveth for ever and ever.*"—Rev. i. 17 and note. It is appropriate that the living creatures should praise God as the living One, for He gave them life.

10. "*The four and twenty elders, etc.*"—The representatives of the Church join the chorus of praise. They too have received life doubly from God, physical and spiritual life. They cast their crowns before Him who gave them the victory.

11. "*Worthy art thou.*"—Here God is praised for Creation; in chapter v. the praise is for Redemption.

"*Because of thy will they were and were created.*"—1 Cor. viii. 6. "Yet to

V. And I saw [1]in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals. 1

1 Gr. *on.*

us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him."

"*They were.*"—In the purpose of God Creation "was." In the mind of God it was planned and determined before the foundation of the world; and when the fulness of time came He created all things, and so the second stage was completed. They first "were" and then "they were created."

V. Vision of the taking of the Sealed Book by the Lamb and the Thanksgiving of all Creation.

1-14. *The sealed book is seen in the hand of Him that sat on the throne. No one but the Lamb is found worthy to open it. He takes it, and all Creation (living creatures, elders, angels and every created thing) gives thanks to God and the Lamb.*

1. "*A book written within and on the back.*"—A papyrus roll, written on both sides and rolled together and sealed in seven places.

The question what this book was and what its contents were has been much disputed. We note that only the Lamb of God was able to open it. He appears, as He had been slain. so we understand that He opened it, or acquired the power to open it, by His death. The announcement that He had prevailed to open it was greeted by a thanksgiving for salvation from all Creation; so we understand that they regarded its opening as connected with His work of salvation. At the opening of the seals, different events occur, as recorded in chapters vi and viii. The first four seals are accompanied by a summons from the four living creatures to Christ (or to the mysterious horseman who appears at each opening), to come. If, therefore, the living creatures are the representatives of Creation, the deep interest of Creation in the opening is again emphasized. The first four seals introduce events which are taken to signify conquest, strife, famine and pestilence. The fifth shews us the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God, crying for requital. The sixth introduces the imagery of St. Matt. xxiv. and the signs of the Coming of the Son of Man, and the seventh brings the seven trumpets which are the signal for judgments on the earth, ending in the taking of the Kingdom by Jesus Christ.

Summing up these considerations, we conclude that we are to lay more stress upon the events which accompany the opening of the seals, than on the contents of the book itself, of which no direct mention is made afterwards. The opening begins at the redemption of man by Jesus Christ; it is a matter for thankfulness, and it extends to the time of the Kingdom of Christ. We understand, then, that the opening of the book is the working out of God's purposes in the world by Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for men, and that it culminates in the Kingdom of Heaven.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice,
Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?
3 And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth,
was able to open the book, or to look thereon.
4 And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open
the book, or to look thereon:
5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the

This being so, we may regard the book itself as the Book of Destiny, which unfolds those purposes gradually according to God's will; or as the Book of Prophecy, another form of the same view; or as the Book of Life, gradually unfolding the events through which Christ leads His Church to life eternal; or as the Book of the Covenant between God and Man (the title deeds, so to speak, of the Kingdom), which Christ by His death fulfilled and by right of which He controls all the history of the World and of the Church. Something may be said for each one of these views and in so far as they are the expression of the results which follow the opening of the book they are not wrong. But probably, as we are not told exactly the contents of the book, but only the consequences of the breaking of each seal, we are not intended to understand any book of which we have any knowledge, but rather that under the symbol of a book the principles underlying the history of the World and of the Church are unfolded. These are in the hand of Christ. He comes and takes the book. Cp. Psalm xl. 7. "Then said I, Lo, I am come; In the roll of the book it is written of me."

For the comparison of the book to title deeds, we may compare Jer. xxxii. 11. "So I took the deed of the purchase, both that which was sealed, according to the law and custom, and that which was open." For the idea of sealed prophecy, see Dan. xii. 4. "But thou O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end." And for the Book of Life, Mal. iii. 16. "Then they that feared the Lord spake one with another; and the Lord hearkened and heard and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name." The Book of Life belongs to the Lamb (Rev. xiii. 8, xxi. 27).

2. "*A strong Angel.*"—One who delivers a challenge which neither heaven nor earth nor Hades can take up, has need to be strong. Cp. x. 1; xviii. 21.

"*Worthy.*"—The word used implies "moral fitness" which is needed before one can be worthy to open this book (Cp. verse 9 and 12).

3. "*No one.*"—Neither in heaven (among angels or the elders), or on earth (among the living) or under the earth (among the dead) was found one who could even look on the book.

4. "*I wept much.*"—It was not grief because curiosity could not be satisfied, but grief that in the whole universe was not found one good enough to take up the task.

5. "*One of the elders.*"—In their glorious state they understand the purposes of God as men yet living in the world cannot. So one of them is able to comfort St. John in his ignorance and grief.

Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome, to open the book and the seven seals thereof.

And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living 6
creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb
standing, as though it had been slain, having
seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the [1]seven
Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.

[1] Some ancient authorities omit *seven*.

And he came, and he [2]taketh *it* out of the right 7
hand of him that sat on the throne.

[2] Gr. *hath taken*.

And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures 8

"*The Lion that is of the tribe of Judah.*"—Gen. xlix. 9. "Judah is a lion's whelp." Judah as the chief of the tribes received the title of lion, and Christ who was descended from David and therefore chief of the tribe of Judah is the Lion of the Lion tribe.

"*The root of David.*"—Isaiah xi. 1. "There shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit." (Isaiah xi. 10, Rom. xv. 12). "There shall be the root of Jesse, and he that ariseth to rule over the Gentiles, on him shall the Gentiles trust." The title then is given to Christ as Lord of the Gentiles. As He opens the book He appears very specially as the Controller of the world (Rev. xxii. 16).

"*Hath overcome.*"—Cp. iii. 21. "Even as I also overcame and sat down with my Father in his throne."

6. "*I saw, etc.*"—Surrounded by the four living creatures and the elders stands Christ who though announced as a Lion, is seen as a Lamb, for only by self-sacrifice is the kingdom won, and He who as Ruler was to unfold the purposes of God for all the world, had won the right by the sacrifice of Himself (Acts xiv. 22, 2 Tim. ii. 12).

"*A Lamb standing, as though it had been slain.*"– Isaiah liii. 7. "As a lamb that is led to the slaughter and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb." His resurrection is symbolized by His attitude, for though He was slain, yet He is alive and "standing" in the midst of the throne. The wounds seen in Christ's glorified body are an abiding witness to His death and our salvation.

"*Seven horns.*"—'*Seven.*'—See i. 20, note. The *horn* signifies might or a kingdom. The former meaning is seen in 1 Sam. ii. 10, and the latter in Daniel vii and Rev. xvii. Here the might of Him who overcame and who has won all the kingdoms of the world appear to be signified by the seven horns.

"*Seven eyes.*"—The ever ready watchfulness of the Spirit of God is symbolized by the seven eyes. He is associated with the Lamb, for after His death Christ sent the Spirit forth into His Church. Cp. Zech. iii. 9.

"*Seven Spirits.*"—See i. 4 and note.

"*Sent forth.*"—Gal. iv. 6. 'God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.' But here the Spirit's mission is wider. He is sent forth into all the earth to guide and lead to Christ men of every country.

8. "*The four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down.*"—The song of praise from the whole creation is begun by its highest representatives.

and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

9 And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood *men* of every tribe, and tongue and people, and nation,

10 And madest them *to be* unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth.

"*Harps and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*"—The symbols of praise (harps) and prayer (incense) are in their hands. The harps are mentioned again (Rev. xiv. 2, xv. 2). The incense in viii. 3, 4, where the same explanation is given. Cp. Psalm cxli. 2. "Let my prayer be set forth as incense before thee."

"*The prayers of the saints.*"—The members of the Church are called saints, because they are called to a holy life and their Head is holy (cp. ii. 7 and note). The Church ceaselessly offers prayers to God for deliverance and for the establishment of His Kingdom. The answer is delayed; but the prayers are not lost. When the time comes they are presented before the throne of God (St. Luke xviii. 7).

9. "*A new song.*"—The triumphant song of the redeemed, cp. ii. 17 and note. The new song is often mentioned in the Psalms (xcvi. 1, xcviii. 1) and in Rev. xiv. 3, it is the song of the redeemed. New life and a new Creation need new songs.

Note in the Revelation—

ii. 17. A *new* name for him that overcometh.
iii. 12. The *new* Jerusalem for his eternal dwelling place.
12. Christ's *new* name imparted to the victor.
v. 9. / xiv. 3. A *new* song for the redeemed.
xxi. 1. A *new* heaven and a *new* earth.
5. All things *new*.

"*Thou art worthy.*"—The angel had asked "who is worthy?" The answer is that only the Redeemer is worthy. His worthiness is based on His sacrifice (Swete).

"*For thou wast slain and didst purchase unto God.*"—He had made men His own by the sacrifice of Himself and so He alone was worthy to take the book, whose unsealing meant the control of man's history. The price which Christ paid for His redeemed was His own blood, His own life poured out. The sacrifice, which made the redeemed God's own possession, was the sacrifice of God Himself for man.

"*Of every tribe, etc.*"—The Gospel of Jesus Christ knows no race and no caste and no language, for God is no respecter of persons and all are alike objects of His mercy.

10. "*A kingdom and priests.*"—See chap. i. 6 and note.

"*They reign.*"—The Kingdom of Christ is not yet complete, but it has begun now in every heart which adores Him and in every Church where

And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about 11
the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the
number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and
thousands of thousands; saying with a great voice,

Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the 12
power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and
glory, and blessing.

And every created thing which is under the heaven, and on 13
the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things
that are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that
sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, *be* the
blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and
the dominion, [1]for ever and ever.

[1] Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders 14
fell down and worshipped.

His name is acknowledged. Christians too share His Kingdom (ii. 27 and notes) in some degree. The true Christian is the true king; he has power over his own heart and over sin, and he has influence over others. His reign has begun even here on earth.

11. "*Many angels.*"—The hosts of angels around the throne are now for the first time mentioned. The numbers are countless. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 2, Dan. vii. 10.

12. "*The power and riches and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing.*"—The seven-fold song of the angels is the fullest expression of praise due to the Lamb. The seven words are grouped under one article to form, as it were, one word, which expresses all that can be given by angels and men to Christ. If we think of the doxology from man's side, it means that all we have and are—all our dearest possessions and choicest gifts—are His and are to be rendered gratefully and adoringly to Him in loving, thankful service.

13. "*Every created thing.*"—Whether on earth or sea, in heaven or under the earth every created thing joins in the song of praise. Christ by His death and resurrection began that restoration of all things which is to be finished when He comes (Acts iii. 21, Rom. viii. 19-23). Christ by restoring man, restores all Creation too.

"*The blessing and the honourand the glory and the dominion.*"—The angels' doxology is sevenfold, that of Creation (represented by the four living creatures) is four-fold. The division of Creation is four-fold in this verse (heaven, earth, under the earth and sea).

14. The four living creatures and the four and twenty elders solemnly assent to creation's hymn of praise.

VI. 1-17. The Opening of the First Six Seals.

"*When the first seal is opened, after a summons from one of the four living creatures, such as precedes the first four appearances, there comes forth a rider on a white horse armed with a bow; he receives a crown and goes forth conquering and to conquer. The second is a rider on a red horse;*

1 VI. And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, Come.[1]

[1] Some ancient authorities add *and see.*

he receives a great sword and goes to take peace from the earth. The third is a rider on a black horse, who has a balance in his hand, the symbol of famine; the daily food of man is prescribed by a voice from the throne of God. The fourth rider is mounted on a pale horse, and his name is Death, and Hades follows him. He is to destroy men by God's four sore judgments. The fifth seal shews the souls of the martyrs under the altar, crying for judgment on those who had shed their blood. The sixth seal introduces the signs of the Coming of the Son of Man and all the inhabitants of the earth flee to hide themselves.

1. "*When the Lamb opened one of the seven seals.*"—See notes on v. 1. The opening of this book is intimately connected with the redemption of man, and the right to open it was acquired by Christ at His death. The events which accompany the opening represent the working out of His purposes in the world. The symbols under which they are represented are suggested by the prophecies of Zech. i and vi. In Zech. i. 8-12, horsemen are sent to walk through the whole earth, and they report it to be at rest and still. The angel of the Lord then asks when God will have mercy on Jerusalem (cp. Rev. vi. 10 where the martyrs make a similar appeal) and bids Zechariah proclaim God's anger against those nations who had oppressed Jerusalem and His promise that His temple shall be rebuilt. The first reference is therefore to the establishment of God's Church on earth.

In Zech. vi we have the vision of horses of different colours corresponding to those of Revelation vi. They are there explained to be the four winds of heaven, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. Part go to the north country and part to the south. These two countries represent the enemies of Israel (Babylon and Egypt). The vision of the horses in Zechariah vi is followed by the promise to build the Temple of the Lord (verse 12) and by the crowning of the priest as ruler of God's people. There is also a promise of the coming of Christ as a Priest upon His throne (verse 13.) The leading thought in Zechariah's visions is therefore the restoration of God's people and the building of His Temple and the punishment of His enemies. So in Rev. vii. 1 the four winds of heaven (Zech. vi. 5) are restrained till God's servants are preserved by sealing from the wrath to come, and then under the seventh seal the trumpets with their judgments follow.

The comparison with the prophecies of Zechariah would seem to shew therefore that the horsemen represent the preparation for the Kingdom of God, and the punishment of His enemies.

"*I heard one of the four living creatures, etc.*"—Each of the four horsemen is ushered in by one of the living creatures, representative of Creation, who summons him with a voice of thunder. Whether we consider the summons to be addressed to Christ himself, Who is coming, or to the horseman, is not a matter of importance, for each horseman is preparing the way for Christ's Kingdom, and the summons is therefore ultimately to Christ Himself. Cp. Rev. xxii. 20. "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

And I saw and behold, a white horse, and he that sat 2
thereon had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown:
and he came forth conquering and to conquer.

And when he opened the second seal, I heard 3
the second living creature saying, [1]Come.

And another *horse* came forth, a red horse: and 4
to him that sat thereon it was given to take
[2]peace from the earth, and that they should slay
one another: and there was given unto him a
great sword.

1 Some add *and see.*

2 Some ancient authorities read *the peace of the earth.*

2. "*A white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow.*"—White in the book of Revelation is the colour appropriated to purity and victory. It is never used except in connexion with the servants of Christ or Christ himself. The bow recalls Psalm xlv. 3-5. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh O mighty one, thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride on prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp, the people fall under thee; they are in the heart of the King's enemies. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." If this passage is rightly connected with Ps. xlv, it would seem to point to the victorious career of the Kingdom of Christ. We need not suppose the rider to be Christ Himself. None of the other horsemen are individuals but rather symbols of God's working in the world. This then is best interpreted as the symbol of the victory of the Cross, the triumphant career of the Gospel of Christ. It is seen whenever a sinner repents and turns to the Lord; whenever a Church is gathered out from among the heathen, whenever a Church is stirred up to send forth heralds of the Gospel among those who know not Christ. The vision is also interpreted in a general sense of victory in war, and the symbol is taken to be another aspect of the work of the second rider. But on the whole (in view of the reference to Ps. xlv) we prefer to interpret the first rider as the symbol of the ultimate triumph of Christ. There is here that assurance of the victory of Christianity over the whole world, which was ever present in the teaching of Christ. Those who live in a country where the number of Christians is very small, compared with those who are still outside the Church, can share the comfort which the thought conveyed to the small company of Christians who in the first century received this message.

"*Conquering and to conquer.*"—Even in those early days the Church was conquering (a fact symbolized by the crown of victory given to the rider) and would spread throughout the whole world. Whatever prosperity and strength there is in Western lands, is due to the victory of Christianity. Cp. St. Matt. xiii. 31-33.

4. "*A red horse; and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, etc.*"—Red, the colour of blood, is symbolical of the mission of war, on which the rider is sent. The great sword (the symbol of war) given to this rider explains his mission. This passage and a passage in St. Matt. x. 34, 35 'I came not to send peace but a sword,' have been taken by opponents of Christianity to imply Christ's approval of

5 And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, [1]Come. And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand.

6 And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A [2]measure of wheat for a [3]penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not.

7 And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, [1]Come.

1 Some add *and see.*

2 Gr. *choenix*, a small measure.

3 The word in the Greek denotes a coin worth about eight annas six pies.

'religious war' or *Jehad*. It is sufficient to point out that the whole spirit of Christ's teaching is contrary to such an idea (cp. St. Matt. v. 38-48); that Christ condemned the use of force or violence by His disciples (St. Luke ix. 53-56); lastly that He Himself declared before Pilate 'My Kingdom is not of this world: if my Kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight . . . but now is my Kingdom not from hence (St. John xviii. 36). No words could shew more plainly the falseness of the implication. Here the appearance of war is parallel to the appearance of Famine and Death. They are all pictures of God's judgments and in no sense pictures of methods by which Christians propagate their religion.

5. "*A black horse and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand.*" Black is chosen as a symbol of scarcity approaching to famine. The balance is the symbol of famine. Cp. Ezek. iv. 16 (of the siege of Jerusalem), "They shall eat bread by weight". (Lev. xxvi. 26) "They shall deliver your bread by weight." The thought is familiar to relieving officers in the time of famine, where people get food apportioned by Government order in accordance with their age and requirements. Christ had prophesied that there should be famines before the coming of His Kingdom, and they are often mentioned among the judgments of God whereby He calls the world to repentance (Ezek. xiv. 13). They have often proved a means of spreading God's Kingdom, when the sufferers have by reason of their distress first been brought within reach of the Gospel, and the scarcity of earthly bread has meant a receiving of the Bread of Life.

6. "*A voice in the midst of the four living creatures.*"—In answer, perhaps, to an appeal on behalf of Creation, from the four living creatures, God Himself tempers judgment with mercy and limits the distress which is to be entailed by the famine. The Scripture is full of such cases; cp. Gen. xviii. when God promises to spare Sodom if there are ten *righteous found there*, and 2 Sam. xxiv. where Jerusalem is spared at the prayer of David. Cp. also Jonah iii-iv.

"*A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny.*"—By the penny is to be understood an ordinary day's wages for an unskilled labourer (see St. Matt. xx. 1-16); by the measure enough food to suffice for one day's consumption. Barley being the coarser grain is sold cheaper than wheat. It formed the staple food of the poor in Pales-

And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon 8
him, his name was Death; and Hades followed
with him. And there was given unto them
authority over the fourth part of the earth, to
kill with sword, and with famine, and with
[1]death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

[1] Or, *pestilence.*

And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar 9

tine. So God interposes to limit the terror of the famine and to provide that the poor shall have enough to eat; Isaiah iii. 15. "What mean ye that crush my people, and grind the face of the poor, saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts?"

"*The oil and the wine hurt thou not.*"—Oil was a necessary of life (1 Kings xvii. 12). Even the widow had a little oil left, when all else was gone. The mention of the wine is more difficult to understand in this connexion. But those who visit South Europe and the Mediterranean know how the light wine of the country is a staple commodity. The scarcity was not yet to proceed to actual famine. This was still to come with the fourth horseman whose name was 'Death': see verse 8.

8. "*A pale horse; and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him.*"—Death and the world of departed spirits now come forth to pour out God's four sore judgments, but they also are limited by the command of God. Only one-fourth of the world is to be destroyed. The limitation does not mean that one country is to escape and another to be punished, but rather that utter destruction anywhere is forbidden. This is the last resort. The beasts of the earth represent a land without inhabitants, given over to the wild beasts. When men will not hear the voice of God, He sends plague, famine, war and the beasts of the earth and with these he calls men to repent. Cp. Ezek. xiv. 21, 22, where these are called by God 'My four sore judgments.' The first four seals are marked as separate from the others by the fact that they are ushered in by the four living creatures and deal with the earth directly, while the later seals introduce us to other worlds. But it is better not to regard them as a history of the progress of the Gospel from the time of St. John to the present time or to attempt to assign periods to each seal. We may rather adopt the method followed in the interpretation of the seven epistles and see in all Christ's dealings with His Church the principles underlying these four visions. Thus we learn that the Kingdom of Christ is to conquer (ver. 2), but it has to pass through strife and separation (ver. 4); that judgments will fall on the world but these judgments will be tempered with mercy and God is all through watching over and caring for His people. And we learn too that war and famine, pestilence and death are all made to serve God's purposes and prepare for the Kingdom of Christ, the perfect life of man. They are all under His control.

9. "*Underneath the altar.*"—The altar is the altar of burnt offering, at the sides of which the blood of the victims was poured out. Cp. Lev. iv. 7. "And all the blood of the bullock shall he pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering." The burnt offering is the offering of the life of the offerer. It may be offered in the form of a life lived for God,

the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10 And they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

or of a life sacrificed in martyrdom; but it is in either case appropriately connected here with the altar of burnt offering.

"*For the word of God and the testimony which they held.*"—Cp. i. 9. St. John was banished for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. See also i. 2 and note. In view of these references, it is better not to confine the meaning to the martyrs of Judaism alone, as is done by some commentators. We have here another necessary accompaniment of the spread of the Gospel, as we have had in the first four seals. Martyrdom will be the result of the contest between the world and Christ (St. Matthew xxiv. 9). In our own days we have seen it in China, and in Africa. In Heb. xii. 4 the freedom from this, the greatest of all trials, becomes almost a reproach. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin" (Cp. v. 6 and notes).

10. "*They cried . . . How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge.*"—The blood of the innocent cries to God for vengeance; and the earth which is defiled by it cries for vengeance. (Gen. iv. 10, 11) "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground": "Cursed art thou from the ground, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand."

"*How long?*"—This is the cry of God's people always. How long will it be necessary to endure the triumph of wrong? When will God take the Kingdom and reign? (Psalm lxxiv. 10, 11, 12.) "How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? . . . . Yet God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth." (St. Luke xviii. 7), "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry to him day and night and he is longsuffering over them?"

"*Holy and true.*"—Cp. iii. 7, and notes. Since God is holy, evil cannot exist before Him; He will therefore punish those who have resisted His kingdom, and slain His servants. Relying on His truth and faithfulness, the martyrs had given their lives. Are they to be disappointed? (Psalm cxix 116), "Let me not be ashamed of my hope."

"*Dost thou not judge and avenge.*"—Rom. xii. 19. "Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto wrath (the wrath of God); for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord." In obedience to this command, the martyrs leave vengeance to God and ask Him to judge those who dwell on the earth.

This prayer, like many in the Psalms, has been a source of difficulty to many; how does it accord with the command of Christ that we should forgive our enemies? It should be observed that it is not a prayer for the gratification of private vengeance, but a necessary step in the establishing of God's kingdom in the midst of the earth. If that is to be done, evil must cease and wrong must be punished. We are not to avenge ourselves; God claims that duty Himself. But it is not wrong to commit our cause to Him, as these saints are represented as doing.

And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it 11
was said unto them that they should rest yet for
a little time, until their fellow-servants also and
their brethren, which should be killed even as
they were, should [1]be fulfilled.

[1] Some ancient authorities read *have fulfilled* their course.

And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a 12

11. "*A white robe.*"—Cp. iii. 4, 5, and note. The white robe symbolizes the robe of righteousness, and also victory over death and new life in Christ (Cp. Rev. vii. 9; xix. 8.) The general resurrection of the righteous has not yet taken place, but the individual saints are comforted by a foretaste of the glory, which is to follow and they are bidden to rest till their number is fulfilled.

"*Rest.*"—This word is used in St. Mark vi. 31 and in Rev. xiv. 13. It implies more than mere cessation from toil, 'refreshment.'

This is one of the few passages in Scripture, which throws light on the oft-repeated question concerning the state of the dead. We learn that they are in happiness waiting for the fulfilment of Christ's Kingdom, and taking an interest in its progress on earth and aiding its accomplishment by their prayers.

In the fifth seal, then, we see another principle of the advancement of Christ's kingdom at work. To right wrong and to justify the faith of those who have given their lives for the truth God will come and bring His reward with Him, to render to every man according to his work.

The sixth seal gives us, in terms of the prophecies of Christ, a view of the scene which accompanies the punishment of the world, when Christ comes.

12. "*I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake.*"—From time to time God manifests Himself by great judgments, which fall upon the earth. Earthquakes, famines, pestilences—these are His messages to men to repent and turn to Him. These judgments will be poured forth in terrible measure at the time of the end, but they are seen all through the history of the world. Men explain these phenomena by science, and rightly, for God works in accordance with the laws of nature which He Himself has framed; but they have a moral significance also, and because men have diagnosed the disease or traced the earthquake current round the globe, they have not explained the lesson which God teaches. In these verses the prophet takes the terrible aspects of nature—earthquake, eclipse, falling stars, etc., and heightens their terror, till they become an awful picture of God's judgments falling on an unrepentant world. In doing this, he uses throughout the poetical imagery of the Old Testament.

"*Earthquake.*"—St. Matt xxiv. 7. Christ mentions earthquakes, as signs of His coming. The terror inspired by them is described in verses 15, 16. Those who have experienced the earthquakes of the last ten years will realize the imagery.

Hag. ii. 7 speaks of a shaking of all nations, another kind of earthquake. It is certain that Christianity does shake all nations with which it comes in contact, but it is not perhaps the primary reference here.

great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of
hair, and the whole moon became as blood:
13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree
casteth her unripe figs, when she is shaken of a great wind.
14 And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up;
and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.
15 And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and
the [1]chief captains, and the rich, and the strong,
and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves
in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains;
16 And they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us

1 Or, *Military tribunes.* Gr. *Chiliarchs.*

"*The sun became black, etc.*"—St. Peter quoted this prophecy (from Joel ii. 31) as having the beginning of its fulfilment on the day of Pentecost, i.e., the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. (Cp. St. Matt. xxiv. 29). The description is of an eclipse or the veiling of the heavenly bodies, which takes place in the dust of a volcanic eruption. It is a terrifying accompaniment of such catastrophes.

Those who take this passage symbolically refer this symbol to the downfall of the kings of the earth and their empires. To those who are not walking in the light, utter bewilderment and darkness accompanies the destruction of the powers of the world, which takes place at the setting up of the Kingdom of Christ.

13. "*The stars of heaven fell, etc.*"—Isaiah xxxiv. 4, St. Mark xiii. 25. "The stars shall be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens shall be shaken."

"*As a fig tree casteth her unripe figs.*"—The fruits of the fig tree scattered by the wind, as the hot winds scatter the unripe mangoes, supply the comparison for the falling stars. The scene described is one of terrible upheaval and destruction, and the language is figurative and symbolical of the fall of all that the world thought fixed and permanent and of the utter confusion and desolation that results.

14. "*The heaven was removed as a scroll, when it is rolled up.*"—Isaiah xxxiv. 4, 2 Pet. iii. 12. "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall be dissolved with a fervent heat."

"*Every mountain and island.*"—Cp. Chap. xvi. 20, Nahum i. 5. If we preserve the literal thought of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, mountains and islands are the scenes of such physical catastrophes. If we pursue the symbolical interpretation, it would mean the breaking up of the nations in the catastrophes which usher in God's judgments.

15. "*The kings of the earth, etc.*"—From the king to the slave every man is struck with terror. Cp. Isaiah ii. 10, 17-22, where the leading thought is the humbling of the pride of those who oppose themselves to God and put their trust in idols and in earthly greatness. Cp. also Isaiah xxiv. 2. When the terror of God falls on men there is no thought of caste or rank or wealth but all classes mingle in the one mad rush to save themselves.

16. "*Fall on us.*"—Hosea x. 8, "The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed; the thorn and the thistle shall come up on

and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne,
and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his 17
wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?
VII. After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners 1

their altars; and they shall say to the mountains Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us." Cp. St. Luke xxiii. 30. Terror was inspired in the breast of His enemies when Christ said, "I am he," on the night of His betrayal (St. John xviii. 6); much more will this be when He manifests Himself in terrors as the King of Kings.

"*The wrath of the Lamb.*"—It is a fearful contrast. The Lamb slain that men might live, inspires only terror, because they despised the gift of God and would not turn to Him. The humility and innocence of the Lamb are in striking contrast to the "wrath" which the sinners feared. But the sight of innocence is often terrible to the sinner, even when seen only in man: how much more when the perfect purity of the Lamb of God is manifested in the world!

17. "*The great day.*"—Joel ii. 31, "The great and terrible day of the Lord." Zeph. i. 14, 15, "The great day of the Lord is near.....the mighty man crieth there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath."

"*Who is able to stand?*"—This question is answered in vii. 9. Those who have washed their robes stand before the Lamb.

The sixth seal has shewn the vision of God's wrath poured out from time to time and working to the great climax of the Day of His Coming. The next chapter shews how Christ preserves His Church both militant on earth and triumphant in heaven, while sinners are crying to the mountains to hide them from the face of the Lamb of God. Note the wonderful contrast at the end of chapters vi. and vii. In vi. sinners are fleeing from the wrath of the Lamb: in vii. He is leading His own people to fountains of waters of life.

VII. 1-17. THE CHURCH ON EARTH AND THE CHURCH IN GLORY.

In contrast to the scenes described in chapter vi the Church militant and triumphant, is revealed to the Apostle. He sees first, four angels holding the four winds, ready to let them loose upon the earth, but they are restrained till the servants of God are sealed. These are declared to be 144,000, after the number and names of the tribes of Israel. When their number has been declared, the countless multitude is seen rejoicing before the throne of God. They are keeping the heavenly feast of tabernacles and are announced by one of the elders to be those who have come out of great tribulation, and who now are receiving the fulfilment of God's promises to His people.

There is a break between the sixth and seventh trumpets, as there is between the sixth and seventh seals: and in both two visions of comfort are introduced.

1. "*After this I saw.*"—Cp. xiv. 1. There the 144,000 are seen standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb, after the description of the persecution of the Church by Antichrist (xiii). In both visions the preservation of the church from the judgments which fall upon the earth is symbolized.

of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree.

And I saw another angel ascend from the sunrising, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a great voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying,

Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we

"*Four angels holding the four winds of the earth.*"—Other angels are mentioned elsewhere as having similar powers. We have in xiv. 18, the angel who has power over fire, and in xvi. 5 the angel of the waters. By these references to angelic powers we are taught to regard all nature as under the spiritual dominion of God fulfilling His purposes of mercy or of judgment.

"*The four winds.*"—Cp. Zech. vi. 5 where the four chariots are called the four winds, and they go to allay God's wrath in the north and south countries. Here also the four winds may remind us of the judgments of chapter vi. and the holding of the winds would then mean that till the Church was preserved from harm, none of God's judgments were to fall on the earth. Or it may be more general and merely signify that till God's servants are sealed, no judgments (here symbolized by storms of wind) are to take place.

2. "*From the sunrising.*"—That is, from the East (Ezek. xliii. 2).

"*The seal of the living God.*"—Ezekiel saw in a vision six men sent forth to slay the sinners of Jerusalem, but before they were allowed to depart, the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads (Ezek. ix. 4). The Kings of Eastern lands used signet rings to seal their state documents (1 Kings xxi. 8, Dan. vi. 17, Esther viii. 8). The seal of God is described in 2 Tim. ii. 19. "The firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his, and, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." The seal is, in this sense, the Holy Spirit, Eph. i. 13. "Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit." Cp. 2 Cor. i. 22, Eph. iv. 30. The Church on earth has taken as the outward symbol the sign of the cross in baptism; but there is here no reference to baptism, for the seal is in the hand of an angel.

The sealing of followers is adopted by the Antichrist in chap. xiii. 16. "And he causeth all....that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead." It is tempting to compare the custom of marking the *tilak* on the forehead in India and other countries; but there is a difference which must not be lost sight of. The seal of the Christ or the Antichrist is given to their followers as a sign of protection and acknowledgment, while the *tilak* is adopted by the devotee himself as a sign of devotion or as an invocation of the protection of the deity.

The sealing of the 144,000 seems to be employed to mark them out for a special mission, as well as to preserve them. God is called "living" because He is contrasted with the dumb idols of the heathen (1 Thess. i. 9).

3. "*Hurt not the earth, etc.*"—The judgment is not to fall till the people of God are secured from harm (St. Luke xxi. 36). "Making

shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel.

5 Of the tribe of Judah *were* sealed twelve thousand: Of the

supplication that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

"*On their foreheads.*"—Cp. Exodus xxviii. 36-38. "Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold and grave upon it, like the engraving of a signet, Holy to the Lord.....And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead."

4. "*I heard the number of them* ....."—This number is not to be taken literally. It is the multiple of twelve, the number of the tribes of the Chosen People. The number is again divided, giving twelve thousand for each tribe. These numbered and chosen companies are directly contrasted with the numberless multitude mentioned in the ninth verse. They are mentioned again in chap. xiv where they are called "first fruits unto God and unto the Lamb." To take them to be the Jews or Jewish Christians is to ruin the symbolism of the book, in which the whole Jewish setting of the Old Testament is taken over almost bodily to represent the Christian Church,—a transference which is common elsewhere in the New Testament (Cp. 1 Pet. ii. 5, Heb. xii. 22, Eph. ii. 12-22, etc.) The chosen number, who are first fruits, probably represent primarily the Christians of the first age as a whole who are the first to suffer for the faith and whose lives are first ripened and gathered in. As first fruits they are the foretaste of the numberless multitude who follow, and who are gathered out of every kindred and nation and tongue and people. There can be no doubt that there is here a sequence "I heard the *number* of them that were sealed.... *After that* I beheld *a numberless* multitude."

If this be the meaning, then the picture is one of great encouragement and hope to the present Indian Church, especially for those who are bearing the first witness to Christ in their own district by lives of suffering and persecution. For to-day the first fruits of the great harvest of India are being gathered; the Church in the Indian Empire, like the early Church in the Roman Empire, is now in its first stage. To-day the numered and chosen companies of Indian Christians are witnessing for Christ, in order that in future generations the second half of the vision may be realized in this land. "*After that* I beheld and lo a great multitude *which no man could number*, of every nation and tribe and people and tongue stood before the throne and cried with a great voice "Salvation..." We should never forget the extraordinary position in which we are placed as the pioneers of a great development. The faith and purity of the Indian Church to-day will affect the whole future of Indian Christianity. Just as the honour and privilege of being placed in the forefront of the battle is great, so our responsibility is great indeed and we need by watching and praying to keep our loins girt and our lamps burning and to be like unto them who watch for their Lord.

5-8. There are many lists of the twelve tribes in the Old Testament. Some are arranged according to parentage (Gen. xlix), some geographi-

tribe of Reuben twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand:

6 Of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand:

7 Of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand:

8 Of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand.

9 After these things I saw, and beheld, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of *all*

cally (partly, Deut. xxxiii). The order here is not clear. Judah and Reuben the first by appointment and by birth are placed first; Joseph and Benjamin Rachel's children are placed last. The children of the handmaidens are placed together, except that Dan is omitted and his place given to Manasseh; the four remaining children of Leah are placed together after the children of the handmaidens.

The omission of Dan has never been satisfactorily explained. He was regarded as the apostate tribe. He left his own inheritance and took another by force and there practised idolatry (Judges xviii). In that tribe also was set up one of Jeroboam's golden calves (1 Kings xii. 30). Since one tribe of the thirteen had to be omitted because Levi is included, it would be natural to omit a small tribe which had been conspicuous for idolatry.

There is a tradition mentioned in some Christian writers that the Antichrist is to come from Dan. But this very passage is probably the only foundation for it.

The name of Joseph is substituted for that of Ephraim, perhaps because so many promises are connected with Joseph in the Old Testament (Gen. xlix. 22, Deut. xxxiii. 13, Amos v. 15).

9. "*After these things I saw.*"—The Apostle is now shewn another vision, the heavenly sequel to that which he had just seen. Here those who have been preserved in the great tribulation on the earth are seen in white robes rejoicing before the throne of God. It is the triumph of the Church of all the ages. The 144,000 had been sealed and preserved for the work of keeping the witness of God in the first age. Here "their works follow them" (xiv. 13), even the multitude of saints before the throne.

"*A great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation.*"—It is not easy for us to understand how much this vision meant to the early Christians. In order that Gentiles might have equal rights with Jews in the Kingdom of God St. Paul suffered countless persecutions, and perhaps his martyrdom also was due to the same cause. To us who are familiar with the fact that there are Christian Churches in every country of Europe, in the wild jungles of Africa, in India, China, Japan, Arabia and Persia, in the lonely islands of the South Seas and in the remotest

tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands;

And they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. 10

And all the angels were standing round about the throne, 11

parts of the American continents, the thought of the great multitude from every nation is not new; but it must have thrilled the Christians of early days.

No man could number this multitude. It includes men from every nation, for it is not true, as is sometimes said, that God has appointed for every nation its own religion; for Indians, Hinduism or Mohammedanism, for Europeans, Christianity, and so on. But for all nations the One God has given One Saviour, one Faith. For Christ is the Son of Man, the Head and Representative of all mankind, and in Him each race finds its fulfilment and its salvation.

"*Of all . . . . . tongues.*"—The Church includes also all languages. The Jews used to believe that Hebrew alone was the sacred tongue. The Mussulmans claim that honour for Arabic, and the Hindus for Sanskrit. There is no sacred language of Heaven, for all languages are alike in the Kingdom of God.

"*Arrayed in white robes*"—Symbolical of the resurrection state in which even now those who have received the Spirit of God are clothed. See Rev. iii. 4 note. The Christian on earth has a white robe (his membership in Christ) which he is not to defile; in heaven he is arrayed in the white robe glorified (perfect communion with Christ) (vi. 11, xix. 8).

"*Palms in their hands.*"—A symbol of joy (St. John xii. 13). During the feast of tabernacles which occurred in the seventh month from the fifteenth to the twenty-second, after the harvest was all gathered in (October), the Israelites were commanded to make booths of branches and live in them (Lev. xxiii. 39-44, Neh. viii. 15-16). The custom is still kept up by the Jews all over the world. In Zech. xiv, there is a prophecy of Christ's kingdom (verse 9) connected with the keeping of the feast of tabernacles by all nations (16-19) and indeed the feast seems specially connected with Christ's kingdom, in which it seems to find its fulfilment as Passover does in His Death and Pentecost in the Coming of the Holy Spirit.

10. "*Salvation unto our God.*"—They ascribe salvation to God who has delivered them from the great tribulation, and from their sins, which were washed in the blood of the Lamb, Acts iv. 12. "Neither is there salvation in any other." We may see in the word 'unto' a reminder that man's deliverance from sin and his full development and joy come not from his merit but from God's free love. 'By grace ye are saved.'

"*Salvation*" does not mean being saved from hell. It means being brought into such communion and relation with God by the destruction of the sin which comes between us and Him that we can live our life to its full advantage and enjoy full harmony with our Creator.

"*Our God.*"—It is one of the greatest glories of Christ that in bringing men to God, He has also brought God to men and they can claim Him as

and *about* the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,
saying, Amen:

12 [1]Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God [2]for ever and ever. Amen.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying, unto me, These which are arrayed in white robes, who are they and whence came they?

14 And I [3]say unto him, My Lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

1 Gr. *the blessing and the glory, etc.*
2 Gr. *unto the ages of ages.*
3 Gr. *have said.*

their God, Heb. viii. 10. "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." He is 'Emmanuel,' 'God with us.'

12. "*Blessing, etc.*"—The doxology is seven-fold as in v. 12, but instead of "riches" we now have "thanksgiving." The change is appropriate for there Christ had won the Kingship of the whole world and so riches are ascribed to Him, here He is praised for having wrought salvation, and receives thanksgiving from men.

"*Our God.*"—He is the God of the angels too, not by right of redemption, but of creation.

14. "*These are they which come out of the great tribulation.*"—We are not to limit this deliverance to any particular time, though when the great tribulation which is always going on by reason of the incessant conflict between good and evil, reaches its climax, the deliverance will be correspondingly wonderful, 2 Pet. ii. 9. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation," Acts vii. 11. "There came a famine over all Egypt and Canaan and great affliction." Cp. for the final great affliction, Dan. xii. 1. "There shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered," St. Mark xiii. 19. "For in those days shall be tribulation, such as there hath not been the like from the beginning of the creation which God created until now and never shall be," St. Luke xxi. 36. God will deliver His people at all times out of temptation. With the temptation He makes a way of escape that we may be able to bear it.

"*Washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*"—Psalm, li. 7. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Isa. i. 18, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool."

"*The blood of the Lamb.*"—1 Pet. i. 2, 19, Rev. xii. 11. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." Blood is the symbol of life and the blood of the Lamb means the life of Christ made available for man through sacrifice. It also represents that suffering for another by which sin is atoned and a new heart of love engendered. For this double

Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve 15
him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on
the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither 16
shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat:

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall 17
be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of
waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their
eyes.

sense cp. St. John xii. 24. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone: but if it die it beareth much fruit .... and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Cp. St. Matt. xxvi. 28. "This is my blood of the Covenant which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins."

15. "*Therefore are they before the throne of God.*"—In the Jewish temple the High Priest used to enter once a year into the Holy of Holies "by blood not his own," so Christ entered into Heaven by His own blood and His people too have the right to stand by the throne of God in heaven because of the blood of the Lamb for the life of the Lamb given for them has brought them into the presence of God. (Heb. ix. 24, 25.)

"*They serve him day and night in his temple.*"—Psalm cxxxiv. 1.

"*Spread his tabernacle.*"—There is perhaps an allusion to the cloud which overshadowed the Israelites when they were marching in the wilderness (1 Cor. x. 2). There may also be a reference to the feast of Tabernacles (see verse 9 and note). St. John. i. 14, "The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us." The Humanity of Christ is a tabernacle in which His people may find safety (Heb. x. 20). In fact Heaven itself is the presence of the God of Love and Holiness, and the joy of Heaven is the satisfaction (only obtained by perfect holiness) of enjoying that presence and protection.

16. "*They shall hunger no more.*"—Isaiah xlix. 10, "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite on them; for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by springs of water shall he guide them." (St. John. vi. 35), "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall not hunger and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (St. John iv. 14), "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." The water that Christ gives is the Holy Spirit (St. John vii. 37, 38). Complete satisfaction of all our spiritual longings and desires is here symbolized.

"*The sun.*"—St. Matt. xiii. 6, 21, Isaiah xxxii. 2 where the thought is the same but the metaphor different. "A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (St. James i. 11).

"*The Lamb shall be their shepherd.*"—A beautiful metaphor, the Lamb become Shepherd. Psalm xxiii. 1, 2, Isaiah xl. 11, St. John x. 11 are some of the many passages where this simile is used of Christ. Note that the passage in Isaiah xlix. 10 from which this is taken is first spoken

1 VIII. And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

of Jehovah. Here it is the Lamb who leads His people; so thoroughly does the apostle identify the Lamb and Jehovah, that unconsciously, as it were, he transfers the reference.

"*Shall guide them.*"—This word is used of the guidance of His people by God, Deut. i. 33. (LXX) and by the Holy Spirit. (St. John xvi. 13). We may also compare St. John xiv. 6, "I am the way."

"*Fountains of waters of life.*"—Cp. Jer. ii. 13. "They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters," and also the references given in the note on verse 16. Life, which is communion with God, is given in perfect abundance by the Lamb, the Son of God and Son of Man.

"*God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.*"—Isaiah xxv. 8. "He hath swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord God shall wipe away tears from off all faces." There the promise is distinctly connected with resurrection; here in Revelation with "waters of life." When the last enemy (death) shall be destroyed, sorrow and tears shall cease. Once again we may note the contrast with the world into which Death and Hades are sent to work destruction (vi. 8). Cp. Rev. xxi. 4. No sorrow and no separation can intrude into the perfect life of Heaven, the presence of God. Bede concludes this chapter with the Beatitude 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' [Swete].

VIII. 1-5. OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL AND PREPARATION FOR THE SEVEN TRUMPETS.

The seventh seal is opened and its opening is followed by a silence in heaven of half an hour. The seven angels with the seven trumpets prepare to sound, but first the prayers of all the saints are presented, with incense, to God; fire is then cast on the earth, and lightnings and an earthquake follow.

1. "*When he opened the seventh seal*"—The episode of the seventh chapter is now over. The safety of the Church has been assured and the unfolding of God's purposes, begun in chapter vi, now continues.

"*There followed a silence in heaven.*"—Many suggestions have been made as to the meaning of this silence. We must notice that it is not on earth but in heaven. There is probably no allusion to the silence which earth keeps when God arises to judgment. It appears to be rather the silence, which God keeps (the suspension of revelation), while His people learn faith and His enemies fill up the measure of their guilt. Isaiah lxv. 6. 7. 'Behold it is written before me; I will not keep silence but will recompense into their bosom, your own iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord," cp. Psalm xxviii. 1.

Even while the silence endures, the trumpets which are to proclaim God's wrath are prepared, and judgment is about to fall on the earth. Thus God spoke to Elijah when He pronounced the doom of Israel. 1 Kings xix. 11, 12. After the sound of a gentle stillness God pronounced the doom of the Baal worshippers of Israel.

It is interesting to note that this silence is employed for prayer and that before the trumpets begin to sound all the prayers of the saints are offered.

2 And I saw the seven angels which stand before God; and there were given unto them seven trumpets.

3 And another angel came and stood [1]over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should [2]add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

1 Or *at.*
2 Gr. *give.*

4 And the smoke of the incense, [3]with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

3 Or *for.*

"*Half an hour.*"—The phrase symbolizes a short time; it does not appear to have any mystic significance.

2. "*Seven trumpets.*"—The trumpet was used in Israel on feast days for joy, (as they are employed at weddings and festivities in India), on new moons and solemn festivals (as the blowing of conchs, etc., accompanies temple worship), in war (as Josh. vi. 13, Judges vi. 34 and many other passages) and as a warning (Amos iii. 6. "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city and the people not be afraid?") We also find that at the giving of the Law at Sinai a trumpet was sounded (Exod. xix. 16) and the coming of Christ is associated with the sound of the trumpet (Zeph. i. 16, Zech. ix. 14, St. Matt. xxiv. 31, 1 Thess. iv. 16). The trumpets here symbolize warnings conveyed by means of judgments and the judgments are partial; the complete destruction which accompanies the emptying of the bowls of God's wrath is not seen after the trumpets. Their purpose is to admonish as well as to punish.

"*Seven angels which stand before God.*"—As in Darbars certain princes have the right of entry, so here seven angels are mentioned who stand in special attendance before God. When God sends forth His judgments, He sends chosen angels.

3. "*Over the altar.*"—The imagery of the temple is transferred to heaven. There were in the temple two altars, the brazen altar of burnt offering which stood in the outer court, and the golden altar of incense which stood in the Holy Place near the veil and opposite the ark. The altar here referred to is the altar of incense where the daily morning and evening incense was burned with fire taken from the brazen altar.

"*With the prayers of all saints.*"—In chap. v. 8 the incense was the prayers of the saints; here the prayers are offered *with the incense*, which perhaps signifies the merits of Christ through which prayer is offered to God. For even the prayers of saints need something to fit them for the presence of God: they need the aid of Christ who fills up the imperfections of our best prayers (Eph. v. 2). The burning of incense was a daily memorial of the burnt sacrifices which were offered outside. All through the ages of the Church the prayer "Thy Kingdom come," taught to the saints by Christ Himself, has been ascending. And in this vision we are to see how the way for the coming of the Kingdom has been prepared.

4. "*The smoke of the incense went up.*"—Psalm cxli. 2. "Let my prayer be set forth as the incense before thee."

5 And the angel [1]taketh the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it [2]upon the earth: and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

1 Gr. *hath taken.*
2 Or *into.*

5. "*He filled it with fire of the altar and cast it upon the earth.*"—In answer to the prayers of the saints, judgment now falls upon the earth. Ezek. x. 2. "And he spake unto the man clothed in linen, and said, Go between the whirling wheels even under the cherub, and fill both thine hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city." Then the judgment of God fell.

"*Thunders and voices and lightnings and an earthquake.*"—The silence in heaven now ceases and the trumpets begin (Rev. iv. 5).

VIII. 6.-IX. 21. THE FIRST SIX TRUMPETS.

The first trumpet brings hail mingled with fire and blood and burns up a third part of the earth. The second casts a burning mountain into the sea and destroys a third part of all life in and on the sea. The third makes the third part of rivers bitter with the star 'wormwood.' The fourth darkens a third part of the sun, moon and stars. The fifth lets loose from the bottomless pit a swarm of locusts of supernatural appearance who, led by Apollyon, hurt men five months. The sixth looses the four angels bound at Euphrates, who with their terrible horses and fire and smoke and brimstone destroy the third part of men; but the rest repented not of their crimes.

Before considering the trumpets in detail, it will be well to study some of the general features of the vision. The trumpets are seven and as in the case of the seven seals the first four are marked off from the last three, which are specially proclaimed to be woes. Again, as the last seal is marked off from the preceding six by the visions of the seventh chapter, so the last trumpet is separated from the first six by the visions of the little book and of the two witnesses. Looking forward to the seven bowls of God's wrath (chap. xvi) we find that the spheres in which judgment falls are generally the same, but that the judgment of the trumpets is limited in effect and the bowls complete the destruction. It should be noted further that the destruction which follows the blowing of the trumpets is greater than that which follows the opening of the seals. There the destruction was a quarter throughout, here it is a third. There is an ascending scale. In many points these judgments recall the plagues of Egypt not only in their details but in their main purpose, which was the same in both cases, viz., divine punishment and a call to repentance (see ix. 21). The fire of the first trumpet recalls the hail and fire of Exod. ix. 23, after which Pharaoh acknowledged his sin. The sea became blood after the first trumpet even as the water of Egypt became blood (Exod. vii. 20). The sun was darkened after the fourth trumpet, as in the ninth plague (Exod. x. 21). The locusts of the fifth trumpet recall the locusts of the eighth plague of Egypt (Exod. x. 12). (See chap. xvi. and notes). But in every case, if a judgment of the Old Testament is taken up here, its horror is enhanced as the time of the end draws nearer and men do not repent.

And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets pre- 6
pared themselves to sound.

And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, 7
mingled with blood, and they were cast[1] upon
the earth: and the third part of the earth was
burnt up, and the third part of the trees was
burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

[1] Or, *into.*

And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great moun- 8
tain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part
of the sea became blood;

And there died the third part of the creatures which were 9
in the sea, *even* they that had life; and the third part of the
ships was destroyed.

And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a 10
great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part
of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;

And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the 11
third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men
died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

6. "*The seven angels prepared themselves to sound.*"—This part of Revelation tells us chiefly of the Kingship of Christ, and how that Kingship is to be vindicated by the punishment of the ungodly: but He will not even yet make a full end, for He desires that men shall repent (ix. 20) and gives them an opportunity to do so.

7. "*Hail and fire mingled with blood.*"—The first judgment is symbolized by a great hail and thunderstorm. The fire is lightning, a frequent accompaniment of hailstorms. Psalm cv. 32. The result of the storm was the uprooting of one-third of the trees, which were struck and the burning of all the grass. Cf. vii. 3, where the destruction of trees was delayed.

8. "*A burning mountain cast into the sea.*"—The second judgment is symbolized by a burning mountain cast into the sea,—a judgment even more terrible than a volcanic eruption though it may best be understood by reference to such catastrophes. Volcanoes, which are generally near the sea, cause great destruction of sea life, and the tidal waves which accompany eruptions are the cause of numerous wrecks, while the burning ashes which fall on the ships are also a means of destruction. It is interesting to notice that (if we are right in assuming the late date of Revelation) a few years before, Pompeii and Herculaneum had been destroyed by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

9. "*Wormwood.*"—Deut. xxix. 18. Idolatry is likened to "a root that beareth gall and wormwood." Prov. v. 4. "The end of the immoral woman is bitter as wormwood," Lam. iii. 15. "He hath made me drunken with wormwood." It is a plant of bitter taste and in the Old Testament appears to be a symbol of suffering, as here of death. The bitter waters of Marah were made sweet for God's people (Exod. xv. 23); here the waters are made bitter for God's enemies.

12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner.

13 And I saw, and I heard [1]an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound.

[1] Gr. *one eagle.*

1 IX. And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from

12. "*The third part of the sun was smitten, etc.*"—The fourth trumpet brings a judgment symbolized by the darkening of the heavenly bodies. In Amos viii. 9 it is associated with mourning and grief. Here it is even more terrible, for all the heavenly bodies are smitten and a third part of the light is cut off from the earth.

The first four trumpets bring judgments on Nature (*hence possibly their number. See Symbolism*) and are separated from the last three, which bring new and more terrible plagues, by the proclamation of the three woes which immediately follows. If we maintain the line of thought which we have been following hitherto, we shall see that these trumpet warnings have been repeated in greater or less degree whenever it has been necessary for God to call the world to repentance, and we may expect them to grow in intensity and plainness at the time of the end. We learn that storm and hail, volcano and plague, sun and moon all fulfil His word, and that by means of them He speaks to men. The forces of nature are all under the power of God and any destruction or loss worked on them is a trumpet call from Him to men to repent and glorify Him. In a country where we have been visited with earthquake, plague and famine we may ponder over the teaching of this chapter.

13. "*An eagle.*—The proclamation of the three woes is made by an eagle. The eagle is also associated with judgment, in Jer. xlix. 22, Job ix. 26, St. Matt. xxiv. 28. In contrast we have the speed and fostering care of God in rescuing His people compared to that of an eagle; Exod. xix. 4, Deut. xxxii. 11. Indeed, most of these symbols of judgment have their side of mercy, too. The contrast between the mercy and judgment of God is constantly occurring. The eagle proclaiming woe on the one hand and bearing God's people on the other, is a good example.

"*Woe, woe, woe.*"—Cp. for such triple repetition Jer. xxii. 29. "O earth, earth, earth, Hear the word of the Lord." Ezek. xxi. 27. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it." The repetition here, however, is in reference to the three trumpets which are yet to sound, there simply for emphasis.

"*That dwell on the earth.*"—The name of the non-Christians in Revelation. They are those who mind earthly things, and are not looking for a heavenly city.

IX. 1-12. THE FIRST WOE, INTRODUCED BY THE FIFTH TRUMPET.

1. "*And the fifth angel sounded.*"—The fifth trumpet introduces a judgment under the symbol of supernatural locusts. The fifth seal had

heaven fallen unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss.

2 And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

3 And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

4 And it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads.

revealed the souls of the martyrs under the altar; the fifth trumpet reveals the pit of the abyss unlocked by a fallen star and sending forth swarms of horrible locusts to plague men. Many commentators have interpreted this vision, not of actual locusts but as symbolical of armies which are to devastate the world. While the details of the plague preclude the supposition that this is a literal plague of actual locusts and emphasize the fact that it is no ordinary judgment, they do not, however, seem to fit in with the idea of invading armies: for the locusts are not allowed to kill men and invading armies which do not kill men cannot be understood literally.

"*The key of the pit of the abyss.*"—The picture here is of an underground chamber whose top is covered with a door and fastened with a key. The great underground storehouses for grain common in India may supply an illustration. The word "abyss" is used both of the sea (St. Luke viii. 31) and of the depths of the earth and metaphorically of the place of departed spirits (Sheol). cp. Rom. x. 7. "Who shall descend into the abyss?" Evil beings are said to arise from it (Rev. xvii. 8) to work mischief on the earth and probably it is as their abode that it should be understood. We may notice that it is not till the key is given to the star that he is permitted to open it and allow the locusts to invade the earth. All are under God's control.

2. "*There went up a smoke out of the pit.*"—The advent of the locusts is preceded by a smoke from the abyss adding horror to the description. cp. Joel ii. 2 where the coming of the locusts is also preceded by "a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, as a dawn spread upon the mountains."

3. "*Locusts. . . . . as the scorpions of the earth have power.*"—The ordinary locust is harmless to men; these locusts were not ordinary locusts, but like scorpions, which sting, but do not, as a rule, cause death. Scorpions are a symbol of terrible chastisement in 1 Kings xii. 11 cp. also St. Luke xi. 12.

4. "*They should not hurt the grass, etc.*"—The plague is to be worse than that described by Joel. Ordinary locusts devastate the vegetation, these did not touch it; they attacked only men and, of men, only those who had not the seal of God in their foreheads. We are to understand that God watches over His people and preserves them from harm, as He did the Israelites in Egypt. It may be that what we call natural conditions, which is another name for God's laws in operation, prevent

5 And it was given them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when it striketh a man.
6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall in no wise find it; and they shall desire to die, and death fleeth from them.
7 And the [1]shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for war; and upon their heads as it were crowns like unto gold, and their faces were as men's faces.
8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions.
9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to war.
10 And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months.

1 Gr. *likenesses.*

the pest from attacking the places where His people are; (thus the Israelites far off in the land of Goshen were protected from the first three plagues which befel the dwellers near the Nile); or that superior knowledge or precautions are the means of protection; as when some Egyptians heeded God's warning about the hail and brought home their cattle. Whatever the means, God is the Saviour and Protector.

"*The seal of God.*"—See vii. 1—8 and notes.

5. "*Five months.*"—Five months is supposed to be the period that a plague of locusts usually lasts. Perhaps we are to understand that the plague is limited both in extent, falling only on those who have not God's seal, and also in time, lasting only five months; Satan was so limited in his temptations of Job. See Job i. 12, ii. 6.

6. "*Shall seek death, etc.*"—Job iii. 21. Men in their torment desire to die. St. Paul's desire has been well contrasted; Phil. i. 23. "Having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better."

7. "*Shapes of the locusts.*"—Here follows a wonderful description of these terrible locusts. Like horses in their array and orderly advance, as to war; Prov. xxx. 27 "They go forth by bands." Joel ii. 7.-8. With yellow heads as it were crowned with gold; and faces with a wonderful human look, though still preserving the horse-like appearance, which has been remarked of a locust. (Swete, from Driver.) Such details are introduced to mark the severity of the judgment, but there is no need to seek symbolical interpretations of them all.

9. "*Breastplates.*"—The bodies of locusts are scaly, and present an appearance not unlike the old armour, which is even now worn in some parts of India by the retainers of Princes.

"*Sound of their wings as the sound of chariots.*"—The whirring of the wings of a flight of locusts is a familiar sound and resembles a rush of horses or wheeled vehicles.

10. "*Stings.*"—To the body of these locusts is attached a tail like that of a scorpion. Swete compares 1 Cor. xv. 55. "O death, where is thy sting?" for the symbolism.

They have over them as king the angel of the abyss; his 11
name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek
tongue he hath the name [1]Apollyon.

[1] That is, *Destroyer.*

The first Woe is past: behold, there come yet 12
two Woes hereafter.

And the sixth angel sounded, and I [2]heard a voice from 13
the horns of the golden altar which is before God.

[2] Gr. *one voice.*

One saying to the sixth angel, which had the
trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound at the great 14
river Euphrates.

And the four angels were loosed, which had been prepared 15

11. "*They have over them as king.*"—Prov. xxx. 27. Ordinary locusts have no king. These have one whose terrible name is Apollyon or Abaddon, *i.e.*, Destroyer. He is the angel of the pit of the abyss (the home of death) and may possibly be Satan himself, though this is not certain. It may simply be Destruction personified. The Apollyon of the Pilgrim's Progress is identified with Satan.

12. "*The first Woe.*"—The Apostle announces the completion of the first of the three threatened Woes, which are the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets.

13-21. THE SECOND WOE, INTRODUCED BY THE SIXTH TRUMPET

13. "*And the sixth angel sounded.*"—The second Woe symbolized by the sixth trumpet is the Woe of War, but War on a greater and more terrible scale than the world has yet known. In numbers the armies which fight against men exceed any armies that have ever yet taken the field; and the description of the supernatural horses which vomit out fire and smoke and brimstone and destroy with their serpent-tails adds other terrors to the terrors of ordinary war.

"*A voice from the horns of the golden altar.*"—The golden altar had just been employed for the offering of the prayers of the saints and in answer to those prayers the judgment falls.

14. "*Loose the four angels which are bound at the great river Euphrates.*"—On the river Euphrates is situated the city of Babylon, the symbolical seat of Antichrist, and the historical seat of three (perhaps four) great empires. Assyrians (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11) Chaldeans, Medes and Persians, and Greeks at different times and for different periods ruled their empires from Babylon. The conception that these empires have each their own prince or angel has already been alluded to (i. 20). Dan. x. 20, 21. It may be, therefore, that these four angels are intended to represent in a figure the four empires which once held sway at the river Euphrates; and that their being loosed is a symbolical way of indicating a new invasion of the world by Anti-Christian forces, which should, as it were, unite in themselves all the resources of all four empires.

"*The great river Euphrates.*"—Gen. xv. 18. It is the limit of the land of the people of God. These angels of judgment are bound outside that land.

15. "*Prepared for the hour and day and month and year.*"—God

for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill the third part of men.

16 And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand: I heard the number of them.

17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates *as* of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone: and the heads of the horses are as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceedeth fire and smoke and brimstone.

18 By these three plagues was the third part of men killed, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths.

19 For the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails are like unto serpents, and have heads; and with them they do hurt.

20 And the rest of mankind, which were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship [1]devils, and

[1] Gr. *demons.*

fore knew the exact time of His judgment and when it arrived the instruments were ready.

"*The third part of men.*"—All the judgments of the trumpets are limited in extent, yet severer than those of the seals. God does not yet make a full end. That will be when the bowls are poured out.

16. "*Twice ten thousand times ten thousand.*"—For the numbers cp. Psalm lxviii. 17.

17. "*Breastplates as of fire and of hyacinth (jacinth) and of brimstone.*"—The three plagues of verse 18, are fire and smoke and brimstone So the colours of the breastplates correspond, red to fire, blue to smoke, and yellow to brimstone.

"*Hyacinth.*"—The "blue" of Exod. xxv. 4, xxvii. 16, etc.

"*Horses.*"—Just as the armies are immense in number, the horses are described as supernatural in their appearance.

18. "*Fire and smoke and brimstone.*"—Gen. xix. 24, 28.

19. "*Their tails are like unto serpents.*"—As the horror of the plague of locusts was enhanced by supernatural features, so these horses are described as having serpentlike tails.

20. "*The rest of mankind repented not.*"—They should have become servants of Christ. They did not even repent (Swete). In a very short time men get used to the sight of the punishments wherewith God rebukes sin. The doctrine of fate is a weapon from the armoury of Satan to dull men's consciences.

"*The works of their hands, etc.*"—Psalm cxv. 4-8, cxxxv. 15. The dumb idols which men make with their own hands.

"*Worship devils.*"—With idol worship is invariably mixed up sooner or later the demon worship mentioned here and spoken of by St. Paul in 1 Cor. x, 20. The sophistry that it is not the idol but God under the

the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk;

And they repented not of their murders, nor of their sor- 21
ceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

X. And I saw another strong angel coming down out of 1
heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire;

symbol of the idol that is worshipped, becomes constantly exposed in practice by the hideous forms and horrible rites connected with idolatry, when it is allowed to take its natural course.

"*Gold, silver, brass, stone, wood.*"—Every grade of society is represented, from the Prince with his golden idol to the poor savage of the jungles, who rudely fashions a log for his God.

"*Which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk.*"—Those who are familiar with the lengths to which the ritual of these helpless images can go, need no comment on this verse.

21. "*Their murders. . . sorceries . . . fornication . . . thefts.*"—All these are connected with the worship of devils and idols. There is murder, from enforced Sati to the Thag or poisoner who commits his crime in the name of Kali; there is sorcery from that of the ojha who charms the devil of disease, to that of the poor villager who buries a child alive to ward off a curse; there is fornication practised in temples, and there are thefts in the ruthless exactions and open frauds connected with idol-worship. The horrible catalogue, the fourfold gospel of heathenism, from murder to theft, has not changed since the days of St. John. And though God metes out judgments of plague and famine, men do not repent.

X.—1-11. FIRST VISION OF COMFORT; THE STRONG ANGEL WITH THE LITTLE BOOK.

The series of trumpets is interrupted before the final trumpet is sounded in order that the Apostle may receive two visions of comfort. The first is that of a strong angel standing with one foot on the sea and one on the land, holding a little book. He declares with a solemn oath that when the seventh angel sounds, the mystery of God shall be finished. The seven thunders utter their voices but the Apostle is bidden not to communicate of the Church what they said, and the little book is given to him to eat in token that he shall again prophesy over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings. He eats the little book and finds it sweet to the taste but bitter to the belly.

1. "*Another strong angel.*"—Two visions of comfort intervened between the sixth and seventh seal (vii); so here between the sixth and seventh trumpet there are given two visions of comfort, that of the little book and that of the measuring of the temple. Some have thought that the strong angel is our Lord Himself. They note his strength, his cloud raiment, his face as the sun and his feet as pillars of fire and his lionlike voice. But we have no instance of Christ being spoken of as an angel, and, as has been well pointed out, the form of his oath is not consistent with the supposition.

2 And he had in his right hand a little book open: and he set
his right foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth;
3 And he cried with a great voice, as a lion roareth: and when
he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices.
4 And when the seven thunders uttered *their voices*, I was about
to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal up the
things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.
5 And the angel which I saw standing upon the sea and upon
the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven,
6 And sware by him that liveth [1]for ever and

1 Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

"*The rainbow.*"—Cp. iv. 3 and note; there, however, the word employed is different. The rainbow was the sign of the covenant of mercy to Noah at the end of the flood. Similarly the mystery of God of which the angel proclaims the fulfilment is an expression of God's mercy to man, at the end of the trumpet warnings.

2. "*A little book open.*"—Ezek. ii. 8, iii. 3. As Ezekiel's roll was a message of mourning and woe which he had to deliver to the house of Israel so the little book given to St. John is his prophecy over the peoples. In another form it is the mystery of God. It is not the roll of the fifth chapter, which was sealed.

"*His right foot upon the sea and his left upon the earth.*"—His message is for all the world and his tread upon sea and land alike; both are to hear his proclamation.

"*Seven thunders.*"—Perhaps the voice of the seven spirits which are before the throne. The thunder is called in Hebrew "the voice of God," a phrase which occurs seven times in Ps. xxix and may be connected with this passage.

4. "*I was about to write.*"—St. John having received a command in the beginning to write what he saw, like an obedient scribe, prepares to do so, but is forbidden, for the message is not yet to be given to the Church. So Daniel was bidden to shut up words and seal them to the time of the end (Dan. xii. 4). If all God's purposes were revealed to man there would be no opportunity for faith.

5. "*Standing upon the sea and the earth.*"—So the angel in Daniel xii. 7 stood "clothed in linen which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times and an half; and when they shall have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished."

"*Lifted up his right hand to heaven.*"—An old way of taking an oath. Deut. xxxii. 40. It is still employed in some places.

6. "*And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever.*"—The Living God. Cp. i. 17 and note. He is contrasted with the dead idols and also as He lives for ever, every oath in His name has the guarantee of His unending power.

"*Who created, etc.*"—He is the Almighty who controls all things, and orders the times and seasons and so He is invoked when the time is to come to an end.

ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, [1]and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be [2]time no longer;

1 Some ancient authorities omit, *and the sea and the things that are therein.*
2 Or *delay.*

7 But in the days of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.

8 And the voice which I heard from heaven, *I heard it* again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel that standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

9 And I went unto the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the little book. And he saith unto me, Take it, and

"*Time no longer.*"—The angel of Daniel (xii 7) had fixed the time in mystic language. Now that period which had been assigned for the working out of God's purposes is to come to an end and when the seventh angel is about to sound, it shall be finished.

7. "*In the days of the seventh angel when he is about to sound.*"—The seventh angel announces the kingdom of Jesus Christ, so this is equivalent to the end of the age. Thus the meaning is that there shall be no more delay; not that time, in the abstract, shall cease to exist.

"*The mystery of God.*"—See Introduction "Antichrist," p. 25, and i. 20 note. The mystery of God is the whole plan of God which is being unfolded throughout history. It was revealed to the prophets; and St. Paul gives us a full account of it. 1 Tim. iii. 16. The part which was most impressed on his mind was that the Gentiles were to be fellow heirs of the kingdom with the Israelites. Eph. iii. 1—12. Now this plan is finished: Christ is preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world and the seventh angel will announce the climax, "received up in glory."

"*His servants the prophets.*"—Each in his own age and measure has seen something of the working out of God's purpose. Thus the phrase "in the last days" which frequently occurs in the Old Testament is generally employed of some special manifestation of this mystery of God.

"*Good tidings.*"—The mystery is, in essence, the Gospel, the good news, founded on Christ's Coming and Atonement and ending with His Kingdom.

8. "*The voice.*"—The voice which had spoken in verse 4.

9. "*Take it and eat it up.*"—Cp. Ezek. iii. 1-2. The symbol is taken over from Ezekiel. It seems to mean (i) that the revelation is to remain for the present hidden and not to be at once disclosed, and (ii) that the prophet himself is to have first taste of it so that he can understand its general purport. Later on when both its bitterness and sweetness have been digested, as it were, he is to prophesy again. The message is to become part of his own experience before it can be revealed.

"*It shall make thy belly bitter.*"—Though sweet at the first taste, it

eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey.

10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter.

11 And they say unto me, Thou must prophesy again [1]over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.

[1] Gr. *concerning.*

1 XI. And there was given unto me a reed like unto

will in the end prove a sad and bitter message. Thus it is with God's servants. The message which they have to deliver is in the first hope and enthusiasm sweet as honey but it brings with it disappointment and suffering because of men's unbelief and because of the judgments of God which must follow resistance to His will. Ezek. ii. 10, Jer. xx. 14. Jeremiah though he had eaten God's words with great joy (Jer. xv. 16) yet cursed the day of his birth and felt that God had mocked him. Here is the patience and faith of God's servants. Christ Himself rejoiced over simple faith (St. Matt. xi. 25) but felt the unbelief of the people a hardship. (St. Matt. xvii. 17). Isaiah had to prophesy till the people became hard and deaf and blind to God's message. (Is. vi. 10.) St. Paul, who would have given his own salvation for the Jews (Rom. ix. 3) had at last to confess that they were hopelessly blind and hard. (Acts xxviii. 25—28.)

"*Sweet as honey.*"—Psalm xix. 10, cxix. 103, Jer. xv. 16.

"*Thou must prophesy again over many peoples, etc.*"—Perhaps the simplest interpretation of this is that he had not yet finished his message but that more is to be revealed. The Antichrist, the kings described in xvii. the fate of Babylon, the glory of the Church, all are narrated in the latter part of the book.

We might also understand it of the many recipients of St. John's written message. He is dead but his message still lives and thus in very truth St. John is prophesying to-day before (or about) kings and nations and tongues and peoples. His words are as true in India after eighteen hundred years as they were in Asia Minor sixty years after the crucifixion.

XI. 1-14. SECOND VISION OF COMFORT. THE MEASURING OF THE TEMPLE; AND THE TWO WITNESSES.

The Apostle is given a reed and bidden to measure the temple and altar and the worshippers, but to leave out the outer court which is to be trampled by the Gentiles, together with the holy city, for forty and two months. God's two witnesses are to prophesy for 1260 days and to call down fire and plagues on their enemies until their work is done, and then the Beast from the bottomless pit shall slay them in the great City which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt. The world will rejoice greatly at their death, but at the end of three and a half days they shall rise from the dead and ascend to heaven in the sight of their enemies of whom 7000 shall be slain by an earthquake, while the rest in fear give glory to the God of heaven. Thus ends the second woe and the third is proclaimed.

1. "*There was given to me a reed like unto a rod.*"—The symbol of measuring is employed on three other occasions, Ezek. xl. 3. "And he

a rod: [1]and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

And the court which is without the temple [2]leave without, and measure it not; for it hath

1 Gr. *saying.*

2 Gr. *cast without.* 2

brought me thither, and behold there was a man....with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed....so he measured....the building." Zech. ii. 2—5. "A man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I. Whither goest thou? And he said: To measure Jerusalem....For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about her." Rev. xxi. 15. "He that spake unto me had a measure for a golden reed to measure the city." In Ezekiel its purpose is that the pattern of the heavenly temple may be accurately known and followed by the returning Jews. In Zechariah the Jews, returned from captivity, are rebuilding their temple, and the measuring signifies the preservation of Jerusalem by God. In Revelation xxi. the measuring seems to indicate that the glories of the city are to be understood by the Church. The measuring in xi. appears to be for the purpose of preserving the temple from harm while the Gentiles are trampling the outer court and the holy city. If so, it is similar to the sealing of the 144,000 which preserves them from the judgments which fall on the earth.

"*The temple of God and the altar and them that worship therein.*"—Much has been written on the question whether the actual temple of the Jews or the spiritual temple of the body of Christ is here intended. But if the measuring is rightly interpreted as a symbol of preservation, the temple can hardly be taken to be the literal temple which was not preserved, but was burned by the Romans and has not been rebuilt to this day. The phrase "measure the worshippers" would seem to prove that the meaning is spiritual, and that it is not the literal Jewish temple or Jewish people who are meant. We have an exact parallel to this employment of Jewish symbolism in the sealing of the 144,000 where they are called by the names of the tribes of Israel: and yet, as we there saw reason to think, they are not the literal Israelites but the Israel of God, including all Jews and Gentiles who may be believers on Christ. So here we may conclude that the Temple is the Spiritual Temple, the body of believers who will be preserved by God when the judgments of the trumpets fall on the earth. The sanctuary, which was opened by Christ's death to His Church, the altar, on which we offer up spiritual sacrifices, the worshippers, all are to be preserved by the mystic measuring. "The Lord knoweth them that are His," "He calleth them all by name," He seals them in their foreheads and He measures their dwelling-place.

The principle here taught, then, is that the true worshippers of God will be preserved when His judgments fall on the earth and whether they are Jews or Gentiles is not a question of moment, for all are one in Christ.

2. "*The Court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not.*"—This is the "court of the Gentiles" which was outside the courts where the Jews used to worship. It was twice cleansed by Christ, for the Jews converted it into a market for the selling of animals for sacrifice and for changing Roman money into the sacred money for the Temple treasury. They made it a den of thieves, and now it is to be

been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

3 And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

cast out from God's protection and given over with the city to be profaned by the Gentiles. Similarly in the instructions to Ezekiel, the priests were forbidden to carry any holy thing or to wear their sacred garments in the outer court. Some have thought that it was the unbelieving Jews who were by this order to be excluded from God's protection, but we may perhaps widen the reference and include all those who are Christians only in name and who while claiming to belong to the Church have not the true priesthood which gives them the right to penetrate to the sanctuary. They will not share in God's protection, when He ariseth to shake the earth.

"*It hath been given unto the nations; and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.*"—The holy city had been the seat of the kingdom in the time of David. The Jews always hoped that the Christ would come and establish His dominion at Jerusalem. And even the disciples asked Christ about His kingdom (Acts i. 6). But Christ in reply sent them forth to be witnesses only (cp. verse 8) for the kingdom was not yet to be restored to Israel. Cp. St. Luke. xxi. 24. "They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled." It is this prophecy of Christ which is quoted here, and its literal fulfilment is a matter of history. Jerusalem fell into the hands first of the Romans, and after them of the Turks who now hold it. Literally the prophecy was fulfilled. Spiritually also it has proved true for the tares have grown up with the wheat. The world has always pressed within the Church, trampling under foot as it were the city and outer court; and while the gates of Hades have not prevailed, yet the warfare has been perpetual: the Church on earth is always the Church militant, not triumphant. Her function is still to witness in the kingdoms of the nations and for this purpose she is preserved by God; but the kingdom has not been given to her yet. So here the holy city, the seat of David's kingdom, is represented as given to the nations.

"*Forty and two months.*"—This is the first mention of a period which recurs in the Revelation as 1260 days and three and a half years. In xii. 14, it symbolizes the time of the persecution of the Church. It is the period of the prophesying of the witnesses, and it was the period of Elijah's famine (St. Luke iv. 25). It has been connected with the half week mentioned in Dan. ix. 27, but the meaning of that passage is very obscure. Probably it is chosen as the half of seven years, the number which signifies a complete period; and symbolizes the fact that the dominion of the Gentiles is to be shortened. Accordingly we take forty and two months to represent the time of the Gentiles. Why this period is given in different ways as 42 months, 1,260 days, and 3½ years is not clear.

3. "*My two witnesses.*"—The reference in verse 4 to Zech. iv. 14, gives us the clue to the meaning. "These are the two sons of oil, that

These are the two olive trees and the two [1]candle- 1 Gr. *lamp-stands.* 4
sticks, standing before the Lord of the earth.
And if any man desireth to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of 5
their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man

stand by the Lord of the whole earth." Zechariah had seen in a vision a candlestick representing the Jewish Church. It was fed with oil from the two olive branches. The lesson was that the temple was to be built, not by might, nor by power but by God's Spirit. Two leaders were ordained for the task, Zerubbabel the prince and Joshua the high priest. Thus the prince and the priest are the two sons of oil who become channels of the grace of the Spirit to the Jewish Church. So also in Revelation we understand the passage to mean that Christ has sent the Church to witness in its kingly and priestly capacity to the world till He comes again. The contrast with the king and the prophet sent forth by the beast (xii) who rises from the abyss to kill these two witnesses of God makes this interpretation more probable.

Many other interpretations have been offered; e.g., that the witnesses are the Old and New Testaments, or the Jewish and Christian Churches. But there is no parallel for the personification of parts of the Bible and it would be impossible to explain their death and resurrection; as regards the witnesses being two Churches, we may remark that nowhere are the Jewish and Christian Churches represented as witnessing simultaneously. Other interpreters make the witnesses individuals, e.g., Moses and Elijah, whose recorded miracles are similar to those performed by the witnesses here; but the whole structure of the book would point to their being taken rather as spiritual types than as literal persons. (See Symbolism.) And an interpretation which brings the picture directly in the line of contrast with the symbolism of the powers of evil, and with other passages in the Revelation, by connecting the witnesses with the Kingship and Priesthood of the Church, is perhaps preferable.

"*Clothed in sackcloth.*"—This is the symbol of mourning and of separation from the joys of the world. It was sometimes adopted by the prophets (Isaiah xx. 2). But here we may refer it to the attitude of the Church, while her Lord is absent (St. Matt. ix. 15). "The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then will they fast."

4. "*These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks.*"—As we have seen the olive trees are the living sources of oil for the candlesticks. Cp. Zech. iv. We are thus taught that the witness of the Church can only be successful when it is drawn from the fountain of the Spirit and the witness is himself a channel of the Spirit to others. The second symbol of the candlestick shews that this witness is not hidden. The witnesses are also candlesticks and the light shines in the world because of their faithful words and works. Cp. i. 12 and note.

"*Standing before the Lord of the earth.*"—The Gentiles rule in the Holy City (Cp. St. Matt. iv. 5 for the name) but Christ is Lord of the whole earth and His witnesses stand ever ready to obey His commands. Though the Antichrist and his prophet claimed the kingdom and the priesthood, Christ is still Lord of the whole earth, Himself King and Priest, and His kings and priests stand before Him.

5. "*Fire proceedeth out of their mouths.*"—Jer. v. 14. "I will make my

shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed.

6 These have the power to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of their prophecy: and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them.

8 And their[1] dead bodies *lie* in the streets of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

1 Gr. *carcase.*

words in thy mouth fire and this people wood and it shall devour them." (2 Kings i. 9-12, St. Luke ix. 54). The miracles in this and the following verse are similar to those wrought by Elijah and Moses; but perhaps the point to be emphasized here is the power with which the Church though weak, gives her witness and the miracles which accompany it. Even so Elijah, one witness for God against all the might of the Queen and of the Baal worshippers, and Moses practically alone against the might of Pharaoh won great victories for the faith by the power of God. Not less wonderful or miraculous have been the triumphs of the witness of the Church in later days. When we think of Uganda turning to God after violent opposition and persecution so that in thirty years the whole country was changed, or of British Columbia converted in twenty-five years, we see fulfilments of the promise given here in symbol to the witnesses, that in their weakness God will be present in power and might.

6. "*To shut heaven, etc.*"—1 Kings xvii. 1, St. Luke iv. 25, St. James v. 17. The power which enabled Elijah to do this was prayer; it is the same power which strengthens the witnesses now.

"*Power over waters.*"—Exod. vii. 20. The miracles of Moses are here recalled. The three figures (fire, blood, plague) teach the same lesson. No deliverance has been effected by the Almighty for His people in the past, which He is not ready to repeat (Milligan).

7. "*Finished their testimony.*"—Till the work is done, God's workmen are immortal.

"*The beast that cometh up out of the abyss.*"—The Antichrist. See xiii. 1 and notes. See also Introduction (Antichrist).

8. "*Great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.*"—When Christ's two disciples desired to share His throne, He promised that they should drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism (St. Mark x. 39). Here we have the same privilege granted to the Church. In her character of priest and king she suffers and triumphs exactly as her Lord had done. The faithful witnesses are slain by the power of the Antichrist, in the city where their Lord had been crucified. They are raised from the dead as He was raised and they ascend into heaven as He ascended. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.

The city where her Lord was crucified and where the Church suffers is called spiritually Sodom and Egypt. Sodom was the home of vice and

And from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and 9
nations do *men* look upon their dead bodies three days and an
half, and suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.

And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make 10
merry; and they shall send gifts to one another; because
these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth.

And after three days and an half the breath of life from God 11
entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great
fear fell upon them which beheld them.

And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, 12
Come up hither. And they went up to heaven in the cloud;
and their enemies beheld them.

And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the 13

impurity and by her vice Jerusalem earned the name in the time of Isaiah (i. 9). Egypt was the country of the king who in the time of Moses, set himself up against God. These two places symbolize therefore impurity and usurped power in strong contrast to the purity of the heavenly Priesthood and the rightful dominion of the heavenly King. They are appropriately chosen here to signify the centre of opposition first to Our Lord Himself and then to His Church.

9. "*Men look upon their dead bodies three days and a half.*"—Wherever the world triumphs over right, there is rejoicing among the wicked. For three and a half days the world rejoices (St. John xvi. 20. "Ye shall weep and lament but the world shall rejoice") as it rejoiced over the death of Christ; but the triumph was shortlived, for He rose from the dead; so his servants rise after three and a half days, "as many days as the years of their prophesying," (Swete.) The truth of God always prevails in the end; and rises again after it is crushed down.

"*Suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.*"—Psalm lxxix. 2, lxxxiii. 10.

10. "*They that dwell on the earth shall send gifts to one another.*"—They that dwell, etc. means in Revelation the non-Christian world (Cp. iii. 10, vi. 10, etc.) They rejoice and keep holiday, sending gifts to each other in token of joy, as Christians do at the birthday of their Lord. (Neh. viii. 12). Many a time in the two centuries which followed the writing of these words, did the heathen rejoice over the death of God's witnesses, but the more they afflicted the Church the stronger and more numerous it grew.

11. "*They stood upon their feet.*"—As Ezekiel saw the dead Israel rise (Ezek. xxxvii. 10).

"*Great fear fell upon them.*"—The fear was the greater because of the intemperate joy which had preceded.

12. "*They went up to heaven in the cloud and their enemies beheld.*"—Summoned by a great voice from heaven the witnesses rise and ascend as Christ ascended to heaven in a cloud (1 Thess. iv. 15).

13. "*A great earthquake.*"—Cp. Rev. xvi. 18. The judgment symbolized by the earthquake does not bring complete destruction, for only a tenth part of the city and only seven thousand men are destroyed.

tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake [1]seven thousand persons: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

1 Gr. *names of men, seven thousand.*

14 The second Woe is past: behold, the third Woe cometh quickly.

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become *the kingdom* of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign [2]for ever and ever.

2 Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

"*Gave glory to the God of heaven.*"—The witness of the Church succeeds through suffering and death; the very enemies who persecuted and slew now give glory to God. In many other places in this book we read "they repented not," but here after the martyrdom of the witnesses and their vindication we read "they gave glory to God." Thus the martyrs' works follow after them: this is the patience and faith of the saints. In the oft quoted words of Tertullian "the martyrs' blood is the seed of the Church."

From this truth those who have been cast out as it were, as dead, from their families and communities may have great encouragement. If they suffer in patience, they will rise again and men will give glory to God, and their very persecutors in their own family may be led by their faithful witness to acknowledge their Lord.

14. "*The Second Woe.*"—The second woe was the sixth trumpet. The third is the last trumpet which is now about to sound and to proclaim the taking of the kingdoms of the world by Jesus Christ.

XI. 15—19. PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

The seventh angel sounds and great voices in heaven proclaim the Kingdom of Christ; and the four and twenty elders give thanks to God. The temple of God is opened in heaven and the ark of the covenant is revealed; then follow thunders and an earthquake and great hail.

15. "*The seventh angel sounded.*"—The last trumpet so often referred to. Cp. 1 Cor. xv. 52, "We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Thess. iv. 16, St. Matt. xxiv. 31.) The testimony of God's witnesses on earth is finished and the Antichrist has done his utmost against them: now at last the trumpet proclaims the event to which all God's people have been looking forward, the Kingdom of Christ. No visible appearance of Christ is described in this passage as in the parallel passages in chapters xiv. and xix.

"*Great voices in heaven.*"—The voice of the archangel mentioned in Thessalonians; or it may be that the proclamation is made by the four living creatures.

"*The kingdom of the world.*"—Satan, the Prince of this world, had given the kingdoms of the world to whomsoever he would; and the kings of

And the four and twenty elders, which sit before God on 16
their thrones, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,
saying,

We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, which art 17
and which wast; because thou hast taken thy great power,
and didst reign.

And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the 18
time of the dead to be judged, and *the time* to give their
reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to
them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to
destroy them that destroy the earth.

the earth had combined against the Lord and against His Christ, (Psalm ii. 2, Acts iv. 25—27), the Antichrist had slain God's witnesses, but at last the kingdom is taken from them and restored to Christ, the Rightful Possessor.

"*The Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.*"—Psalm ii. 6. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." (Psalm xciii. xcvii. xcix. Dan. ii. 44). "In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." Dan. vii. 27. All the prophecies of the Old and New Testament concerning the kingdom of Christ are concentrated in this great fulfilment. It is called the kingdom 'of Our Lord and of His Christ,' that is, of Jehovah and His Anointed One, —the Messiah. Cp. the parallel expression 'The throne of God and of the Lamb.'

"*For ever and ever.*"—The kingdoms of the world were many and one empire succeeded another. In the Kingdom of Christ there is no such change; His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom and his dominion that which shall not pass away.

16. "*The four and twenty elders.*"—The representatives of the Church give thanks to Him Who has fulfilled all His promises and has taken the kingdom. They had often joined in the prayer "Thy Kingdom come," He has now fulfilled it.

17. "*Which art and wast.*"—Instead of the phrase "which art and wast and art to come" we have "which art and wast," only, for He has now come.

18. "*The time of the dead to be judged.*"—In this thanksgiving are included all the events of Christ's Kingdom; they are described at length in the later parts of the book. Thus the Kingdom is seen in xx. 4, the judgment of the dead in xx. 11—15. Cp. St. Matt. xxv. where the three parables of judgment occur.

"*Reward to thy servants the prophets and to the saints and to them that fear thy name.*"—"The prophets" are those on whom the Spirit of God has descended and who have testified before men. "The saints" is the name for those who are in covenant relation to God. It is used both of the Jewish Church and of the Gentile Church. Here it includes all those who have made a covenant with God by being obedient to His word.

19 And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his [1]covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.

[1] Or *testament.*

"Those that fear" are the proselytes of the Church (Acts x. 2). When the secrets of all hearts are revealed there will be found to be many who thus fear God and who will receive reward from Him that searcheth the hearts, though men may not have numbered them among the saints.

"*To destroy them that destroy the earth.*"—The earth is destroyed or corrupted in countless ways by those who do not fear God. Evil customs, selfish lives, crimes—all such things destroy the earth and defile it, and it cries to God for redress.

19. "*The temple of God that is in heaven.*"—The heavenly Temple is contrasted with the earthly temple, with the measurement of which the chapter opened. The way to it was opened by the blood of Jesus Christ (Heb. x. 19, 20) and now the people of God enter in.

"*The ark of his covenant.*"—The literal ark was lost during the Babylonish captivity. The Holy of Holies in Herod's temple was empty, the sign of God's covenant was not there. But now God has made a new covenant with men (St. Luke xxii. 29, Heb. viii. 8—12) and according to that covenant there will be perfect communion between God and man (symbolized now by the Holy Communion), and in token of this perfect communion the heavenly ark of the covenant is seen.

"*Earthquake.*"—xvi. 18.

"*Great hail.*"—xvi. 21.

In this section (iv-xi) we have traced the story of Christ's dominion. We saw the eternal kingship in chapter iv, the victory which gave Him the right to open the sealed book of God's purposes in v; the opening of the seals in vi, and as each one was opened Christ's working in the world was manifested; in vii. we saw His sovereignty in the preservation of His own people and in viii and ix we saw the judgment warnings which He sent on the earth. Even while judgment falls, the witness to His kingdom is to be maintained and His messenger is commanded to prophesy till the mystery of God is finished. The tabernacle of witness, His temple, is preserved, even though His witnesses, after giving their testimony, are destroyed by the powers of evil (x, xi). And so at last the kingdoms become the kingdoms of Christ.

We now enter upon a new section of the book, that which we have called the history of the Church. (Introduction "Analysis.") Here we shall see the contest between the Church and the world. This section is divided into three parts, each of which ends with the Coming of Christ. They are not consecutive but parallel with one another, and parallel, too, with the foregoing section (iv—xi). As the narrative proceeds events are taken up, one after another, and detailed, till at last we have a complete view of the Coming of Christ and the Church, in these four pictures of chapters xi, xiv, xvi, xix. Thus, in xi we have the proclamation of the kingdom of Christ: in xiv Christ Himself appears, crowned, and reaps the harvest and treads the wine press. In xvi the muster of the armies of evil is narrated (13—16) and the destruction of Babylon mentioned but

XII. And a great sign was seen in heaven; a woman arrayed 1
with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her
head a crown of twelve stars;
And she was with child: and she crieth out, travailing in 2
birth, and in pain to be delivered.
And there was seen another sign in heaven; and behold, a 3

neither the fall of Babylon nor the battle is fully described, till xviii (fall of Babylon) and xix (the great battle).

XII. 1—6. THE VISION OF THE CHURCH. THE WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN, AND HER CHILD.

A great sign appears in heaven; a woman arrayed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and crowned with twelve stars, travailing with child, she brings forth a man-child who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron. A great red dragon stands ready to devour the child, which is caught up to God and to His throne, while the woman flees to an appointed place in the wilderness, where she is nourished for 1260 days.

1. "*A great sign.*"—Cp. xii. 3, xv. 1. The first part of the book opened with a vision of Christ and there followed the vision of the Throne of God. The second part opens with a vision of the Church and there follows a vision of the kingdom of Antichrist.

"*A woman arrayed with the sun.*"—The woman symbolizes the ideal Church. She is arrayed in light. The Israelitish Church is often spoken of in the prophets as a woman, the daughter of Zion. (Isaiah xxxvii. 22, Zech. ix. 9). The Church is represented as married (Isaiah liv. 5) though barren (Isaiah liv. 1). So the imagery employed here is familiar.

"*A crown of twelve stars.*"—The mention of the sun, moon and stars is a reference, perhaps, to Gen. xxxvii. 9, 10 and the twelve stars recall the twelve stars of Joseph's dream. We have already had the twelve tribes (vii) and the twelve apostles associated with the Church. The twelve stars carry on that idea.

2. "*And she was with child; and she crieth out travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered.*"—The figure of the Church as a mother is not uncommon (Isaiah liv. 1) and the sorrows which the Church undergoes before the advent of her Lord are called birthpangs. (St. Matt. xxiv. 8). "But all these things are the beginning of travail." It is a matter of history that the Jewish Church had to suffer persecution and captivity before the fulness of the time came when Christ was born of a virgin (Mic. iv. 9, 10). But we may also connect with these pains the anguish of the servants of Christ who cry day and night before Him (St. Luke xviii. 7 and such passages as St. John xvi. 21), "A woman when she is in travail" hath sorrow because her hour is come; but when she is delivered of a child, she remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world (Gal. iv. 19).

3. "*A great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems.*"—We are told in verse 9 that the dragon is Satan. He recalls the visions of Daniel, where beasts and horns represent the kingdoms of the world. He comes with his diadems and symbolizm of dominion to destroy the man child who is to take away his dominion and to rule all

great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems.

4 And his tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was about to be delivered, that when she was delivered, he might devour her child.

5 And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne.

nations. The idea of a dragon as representing the powers of evil is as old as the world. In the Book of Genesis Satan tempted Eve in this form. The Greek mythology supplies similar instances, and the Hindus have the legend of the dragon Rahu, who seizes the sun and the moon. In Daniel the dominions are only four; the dragon here has seven heads and seven diadems, the symbol of dominion not of victory (ii. 10 and notes). He has united in himself all the kingdoms of the world (St. Luke iv. 6).

The whole scene recalls the Garden of Eden and the curse upon the serpent. Gen. iii. 15. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel."

"*Red.*"—The colour suggests the shedding of the blood of the saints (Rev. xvii. 3, 6).

"*Ten horns*" Dan. vii. 7.—The horns symbolize dominion and power.

4. "*His tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven.*"—Cp. Dan. viii. 10 when the "little horn" casts down and tramples the stars. The symbol may be intended to shew the great power and pretensions of the dragon (Eph. vi. 12).

"*The dragon stood before the woman... that... he might devour her child.*"—It had been foretold to Satan (Gen. iii. 15) that the seed of the woman should bruise his head and he waits for the birth of the seed in order to destroy Him. When Christ was born, he attempted to kill Him by the hands of Herod (St. Matt. ii.): but far more terribly did he attempt to destroy him when he tempted Him forty days (St. Matt. iv). "Two figures dominate pre-Christian history—humanity fallen but struggling to the birth of a higher life, and the hostile power of evil watching the opportunity to defeat the realization of the hope" (Swete).

5. "*She was delivered of a son, a man child.*"—The expression a son, a man child is very emphatic. There is perhaps in the background the thought that this Son, this Man, was to be the Second Adam, the Head of the New Creation, and that in Him, the true Son of Man, all God's purposes concerning man were to be fulfilled.

"*Who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.*"—Psalm ii. 8, 9. The original promise made at creation "Let them have dominion" is fulfilled in Christ. Satan offered this dominion to Christ at the temptation but on terms which would have made Satan, not Christ, king (St. Luke iv. 6).

"*And her child was caught up unto God and unto his throne.*"—Thus briefly is the story of Christ's life on earth told. It was one series of

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a 6
place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a
thousand two hundred and threescore days.

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels 7
going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred
and his angels;

And they prevailed not, neither was their place found 8
any more in heaven.

temptations (St. Luke xxii. 28) culminating in the great struggle of the Cross. But Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty (Psalm cx. 1, St. Mark xvi. 19).

There is no need to confuse the symbolism by interpreting the man child of the Body of Christ, the Church, nor His ascension as the exaltation of the Church to share His dominion. All this is involved in the victory and ascension of Christ but it will be related in its place in this very vision.

6. "*The woman fled into the wilderness.*"—The imagery of the Exodus is employed here. Just as Pharaoh (the dragon of Isaiah xxvii. 1; Psalm lxxiv. 13) tried to destroy all the men children of the Israelites as soon as they were born, and God took His people out of his reach into the wilderness, so here the Church finds a refuge prepared by God in the wilderness. There is also underlying the idea that, as the Israelites, after the forty years' training of the wilderness, reached the promised land at last, so the Church, after her training in the wilderness, will reach her place of rest. We need not refer the flight of the Church to any particular historical event, but rather to her attitude throughout the whole time of her Lord's absence, waiting and watching, separate from the world and enduring hardship (St. John xvii. 15, 16; St. Matt. ix. 15).

"*A thousand two hundred and threescore days.*"—Cp. Rev. xi. 3. The period of the prophesying of the witnesses. The time is the same and the thing symbolized is the same, though it is there presented to us as a witness delivered in a hostile world and here as a sojourn in the wilderness. The Church is nourished, like Israel of old, on heavenly bread (St. John vi. 35) and water of life (St. John iv. 14. 1 Cor. x. 1-4, Deut. viii. 1-8).

7—12. WAR IN HEAVEN; CASTING OUT OF THE DRAGON.

Michael and his angels engage in war with the dragon and overcome him and he is cast out into the earth; thanksgiving in heaven for the casting out of the accuser of the saints; woe to the earth, for the devil is come down to earth having great wrath.

"*There was war in heaven.*"—This can hardly be the war by which Satan originally fell, but rather that same conflict which goes on between the forces of good and evil on earth, carried on also in Heaven. This is an example of the contrasted heavenly and earthly symbolism which runs through the book (Eph. vi. 12). Michael is the angel who champions the people of God in Dan. x. 13—21; Jude 9.

"*The dragon warred, and his angels.*"—Satan's angels are mentioned in St. Matt. xxv. 41; Jude 6.

9 And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole [1]world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.

10 And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, [2]Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accuseth them before our God day and night.

11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death.

1 Gr. *inhabited earth.*

2 Or *now is the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom, become our God's, and the authority* is become *his Christ's.*

9. "*The old serpent.*"—Gen. iii. 1. This is the beginning of the bruising of the serpent's head (Gen. iii. 15).

"*Devil.*"—Literally "the slanderer." It is the Greek translation of the name Satan, the adversary.

"*He was cast down to the earth.*"—St. Luke x. 18. He is now limited to the earth in his operations.

In every nation there are traditions of great contests between the heavenly hosts and the powers of evil; they were familiar to Greeks and Romans and such stories are found in India too; but this war of Rev. xii is totally different from them. They are based on primitive stories of earthquakes and storms; this is an allegorical account of spiritual strife.

10. "*A great voice.*"—The voice of the redeemed in heaven proclaims the triumph, which stops the mouth of the accuser of their brethren.

"*Now is come the salvation and the power.*"—They proclaim that the victory of Christ which brings forgiveness and life to men is their salvation. The power was claimed by Christ at His ascension (St. Matt. xxviii. 18) and is another result of His victory.

"*The Kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ.*"—The prayer "Thy Kingdom come" has been answered by the overthrow of Satan. The authority of Christ is received by Him from the Father (Psalm ii. 8) when the plots and malice of His foes have come to nought.

"*The accuser of our brethren.*"—The Jews believed that there were two angels Shammael the accuser and Michael the advocate (reproduced as Munkar and Nakir in the Mohammedan theology, and this idea seems to underlie the thought of this passage.

11. "*They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb.*"—The idea that the war in heaven is a reference to the time of Satan's original fall is refuted by this account of the means of the victory. They overcame by the death of Christ. Christ's blood cleanses from all sin, and so Satan's accusations have no effect on those whose sins are washed in the blood of the Lamb (vii. 14).

"*They loved not their life even unto death.*"—St. John xii. 25. "He that loveth his life loseth it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that [1]dwell in them. 12
Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the
devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, 1 Gr. *tabernacle.*
knowing that he hath but a short time.

And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the 13
earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man
child.

And there was given to the woman the two wings of the 14
great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her
place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and
half a time, from the face of the serpent.

12. "*Rejoice, O heavens.*"—The place promised by Christ (St. John xiv. 1, 2) is now prepared for the saints by the casting out of Satan and there is joy which no man can take away.

"*Ye that dwell in them.*"—Literally, "that make your tabernacle in them."—Cp. vii. 9. note.

"*Having great wrath.*"—His defeat in heaven exasperates the Devil, so that he is all the more determined to wreak his vengeance on the earth.

"*He hath but a short time.*"—The Devil cast out of heaven sees that his stay on earth must also end in defeat by the Blood of the Lamb and the word of the testimony of His people, and that his time must be short. Whatever attempts he may make to turn men from their allegiance to God, if they are to be successful, must be made immediately.

13-17. THE PERSECUTION OF THE WOMAN AND HER SEED.

The dragon being cast down to the earth persecutes the woman, who flies on the wings of the eagle into the wilderness. The dragon sends forth a flood after her but the earth swallows up the flood, and the dragon goes to persecute her seed and stands upon the sea shore, to summon from the sea the second beast.

13. "*He persecuted the woman.*"—Baffled in his assault on the heavens, the Devil persecutes the Church on earth. For at least two hundred years after the writing of this prophecy, the Church suffered terrible persecutions. But even when these ceased the attacks of the dragon did not cease, for he persecutes always in many different ways.

14. "*Two wings of the great eagle that she might flee into the wilderness.*"—The wings of the eagle seem to symbolize rapid and heavenly means of escape from the attacks of Satan. Cp. Exod. xix. 4. "I bare you on eagles' wings." As God rescued His people from Egypt by guiding them miraculously into the wilderness, so He rescues His Church (Isaiah xl. 31). "They that wait upon the Lord shall... mount up with wings as eagles." Throughout the whole 1260 days of her trial on earth the Church is preserved by the power of God from the malice of the serpent. Her life is hid with Christ in God. She dwells in the secret place of the Most High.

"*She is nourished.*"—As Elijah was nourished for the three years and a half of famine (1 Kings xvii) and the Israelites were nourished in the wilderness (Deut. viii. 4).

15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream.

16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17 And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went

"*Time, times and a half.*"—A mystical method of writing three and a half years, borrowed from Dan. vii. 25, where the duration of the power of the little horn is the same. A time is a year, times two years. It is, as in xi. 2, 3, the time of the power of evil and of the Church's witness and trial. Swete compares this dwelling in the wilderness to the isolated life of the Christians of the first two centuries, cut off in many ways from their fellow men. The conditions to-day in India are in some respects similar.

15. "*The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a river.*"—So in xvi. 13 unclean spirits are represented as coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and the beast and the false prophet, and they go forth to corrupt the dwellers on the earth. What we are to understand by the river is not quite clear. We have already had in the flight in the wilderness a recollection of the Exodus, and this has been thought to be a further reference to the passage of the Red Sea. But probably the better explanation is found in verses which occur with frequency in the Psalms, where the forces of evil are symbolized by floods, e.g., Psalm cxxiv. 4, 5. "Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul; then the deep waters of the proud had gone over our soul."

The devices of Satan against the Church are many, but in the main they fall under two heads, persecution and corruption by false members. Persecutions came like a flood during the first three centuries; then when toleration followed, nominal adherents flocked into the Church and for many centuries she was a prey to strife and division and heresy. Both of these methods of opposition represent the usual temptations of Churches. First persecution and outcasting of Christians; then applause and popularity and corruption. We have not yet reached the second stage in the Indian Church, but it may come and perhaps sooner than we expect.

16. "*The earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the river.*"—The idea is of a stream burying itself underground, a not uncommon sight during the hot weather in tropical countries. What is symbolized by the picture is doubtful but we see that there come times in persecutions when a country can stand no more, and the people themselves (the earth) revolt from the cruelty. Again, policy may require that the attacks should cease. So Constantine, the Roman Emperor found it necessary to bind his Empire together by a religious bond and he checked persecution and tried to make Christianity the uniting force. In different ways the "earth" helps the Church, because the Church has secrets of right government and justice within her, which are necessary for the existence of the world.

17. "*The dragon waxed wroth....and went away to make war with the rest of her seed.*"—Since he can neither destroy Christ nor the

away to make war with the rest of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus:

XIII. And he stood upon the sand of the sea. 1.

And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy.

Church as a whole, the Devil tries to destroy individual souls and isolated Churches. The Church has often experienced this. Persecutions have arisen in different parts of the world: in our own time Uganda, China and the South Seas have witnessed the war of the Dragon against the seed of the woman (Gen. iii. 15).

XIII. 1. "*He stood upon the sand.*"—Satan now prepares to set up a rival kingdom to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

XIII. 1-10. THE DESCRIPTION OF ANTICHRIST, THE BEAST FROM THE SEA.

At the summons of the dragon, the beast appears from the sea; he combines the features of the beasts of Daniel, and receives power from the dragon. He simulates a resurrection in one of his heads, and all the earth in wonder worships him during his reign of forty and two months. He blasphemes God and makes war against the saints, who are instructed to bear their afflictions with patience.

1. "*A beast coming up out of the sea.*"—We are thus shewn the second person of the diabolical triad which is presented in these two chapters. He has been mentioned in xi. 7, but he is now described. The dragon summons a beast who counterfeits the work of the Christ, and thus shews himself to be a true Antichrist. He is in form like the dragon, with seven heads and ten horns; but he bears on his heads names of blasphemy, exalting the dragon to the place of God. He combines the features of the beasts of Daniel vii, and the dragon gives him authority, as God the Father gives authority to the Son. One of his heads is wounded to death and is healed, a parody of the resurrection of Christ. The praise given to him by the world is a parody of the praise given to God, and he makes war against the saints, unresisted by them.

"*Out of the sea.*"—Dan. vii. 2. In Rev. xvii. 15 we learn that "the waters where the harlot sitteth, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues." If this is the interpretation here, we learn that this beast rises from among the nations of the world. But the phrase probably points to the fact that the Roman power, which was the representative of Antichrist in Asia, came there from beyond the sea.

"*Ten horns and seven heads.*"—See xii. 3. In Rev. xvii. 8 and the following verses the mystery of the beast is explained. The seven heads represent seven hills and also seven kings, while the ten horns are ten kings whose power is yet to come. In Daniel the four beasts, similarly represent four kings, that is four kingdoms. They are according to the older interpretation (Pusey on Daniel) Chaldea, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome; according to the later interpretation, Chaldea, Media, Persia, and

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the *feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.

Greece (Driver). Whatever the exact interpretation of the heads and horns be, the general meaning is clear; the Beast combines in himself all the features of the powers of the world from the beginning of their dominion to the end. We cannot doubt that the apostle intended primarily to describe the Roman Empire and the persecution which befel the Church in his own times, but he certainly intended to shew also the principles of the opposition to Christ and its methods. As we shall see, the chapter has messages for every age and every country.

"*Upon his heads names of blasphemy.*"—Every world-wide empire has claimed for its rulers names and titles which are blasphemous. Egypt's king boldly matched himself against the God of Israel, Sennacherib of Assyria blasphemed the God of Israel, when he besieged Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time. In Chaldea we have Nebuchadnezzar in his proud boasting and Belshazzar in his defiance of God; among the Medes, Darius commanding that prayer should be made to him alone; among Greeks, Alexander claiming divine honours as the son of Amon, Antiochus Epiphanes defiling the sanctuary of Jehovah; among Romans Caligula, Nero and Domitian demanding worship from the world. The truth of this picture was only too plain to the minds of those for whom St. John first wrote. They were required to burn incense to the Emperor's image and to salute him as God, or to suffer punishment and even death.

2. "*Like unto a leopard.*"—His general form is that of the third beast of Dan. vii. which has been variously interpreted as the Persian and as the Greek power. Treachery and swiftness are the leading characteristics of the leopard. Hab. i. 8, Hos. xiii. 7 illustrate these two thoughts.

"*Feet of a bear.*"—The bear is the second beast of Dan. vii. and is there taken to represent the Medes or the Medes and Persians. It is a symbol of strength and was much dreaded by the Palestine shepherds (1 Sam. xvii. 34.)

"*Mouth of a lion.*"—The roaring of the lion is frequently mentioned in the Bible (1 Pet. v. 8). It is the first beast of Dan. vii. and there signifies the Chaldean power.

The Antichrist here represented combines some of the features of the former dominions; swiftness, treachery, strength, and terrible roaring; but neither the order nor the complete symbolism of Daniel is repeated. He is therefore probably to be considered to represent the ideal world dominion opposed to Christ, typified in brute forces of cruelty and savagery, as opposed to the suffering and meekness of the Lamb and the patience and faith of the followers of the Lamb.

"*The dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.*"—Even as he offered them to Christ who refused them, the dragon gives the dominion of the world to Antichrist, thereby imitating the giving of the dominion to the Son by God the Father (St. John v. 19-27, 1 Cor. xv. 24-28.)

And *I saw* one of his heads as though it had been [1]smitten 3
unto death; and his death-stroke was healed:
and the whole earth wondered after the beast:
1 Gr. *slain.*
And they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his 4
authority unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast,
saying, Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to war
with him?
And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things 5
and blasphemies; and there was given to him
authority to [2]continue forty and two months.
2 Or *to do* his works *during.* See Dan. xi. 28.

3. "*One of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death.*"—Here the Antichrist counterfeits the death and resurrection of the Son of God. If we interpret the heads as different dominions, it appears to mean that one of these powers is seen to rise from its ruins and weakness into renewed strength. Among the Romans there was some doubt about the death of the Emperor Nero, and gradually a story came to be believed that he would re-appear. Those who interpret the kings as Roman Emperors suppose that St. John has made use of this story to shew the way the rulers of the world may exhibit a false power of renewing their strength. If the story of Nero be taken here, it was fulfilled when Domitian, brother of Titus the destroyer of Jerusalem, rose in the spirit and cruelty of Nero and earned the title of "the second Nero."

4. "*They worshipped the dragon.*"—In the Roman Empire, as we have seen, the worship of the Emperors was a terrible reality. It has also been suggested that the ready imitation of the vices of the Imperial Court, which were sometimes almost incredible in their licentiousness, may be an illustration of the worship of the dragon. So too in a country where the saying that "There is no blame to the mighty," has passed into a proverb, the worship of mere strength and splendour is a subject for a warning.

"*Who is like unto the beast?*"—Cp. Exod. xv. 11. "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?" They parody the triumph song of Moses over Pharaoh, the first great representative of the Dragon's delegated dominion, and ascribe the glory of God to Antichrist. (Rev. xv. 3).

"*Who is able to war with him?*"—The world's test of divinity is power. The mythology of Roman, Greek, Teuton and Hindu, all alike prove that what the world worships is strength. Christ's dominion is the rule of Love.

5. "*A mouth speaking great things and blasphemies.*"—This characteristic is also mentioned in Dan. vii. 11-25. It recurs many times in the Old Testament prophets (Isaiah xiv. 13, xxxvii. 23, 24, Obad. 3). The titles which the monarchs of Persia took, the claims of the Roman Emperors, or in modern times the cynicism of a Napoleon, all illustrate the way in which the rulers of the world exalt themselves against the Most High and against His Christ.

"*Forty and two months.*"—The recurrence of the mystic period, which indicates the time of Antichrist's rule and the Church's trial, seems to

6 And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, *even* them that [1]dwell in the heaven.

7 [2]And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation.

8 And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, *every one* whose name hath not been [3]written in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world.

1 Gr. *tabernacle.*

2 Some ancient authorities omit *and it was given . . . overcome them.*

3 Or *written from the foundation of the world in the book . . . slain.*

shew that, though we may look for a special manifestation of the Antichristian principle at the time of the end, the beast is to be taken as representative of the general principles of the opposition of the kingdoms of this world to God and His Christ. See xi. 2, xii. 6, 14, and notes.

6. "*Against God, . . . his name, and his tabernacle, even them that dwell in the heaven.*"—The Antichrist blasphemes God's name, that is, His attributes and manifestation. Such blasphemy is not unfamiliar; all railing against the "cruelty of God" or cynical criticism of the creation of God or any such light blasphemous talk, which is so common, comes under this head. "Those who dwell in the heaven" are not "the dead" but those whose proper home is heaven, God's people, whose life is hid with Christ (Col. iii. 1-4).

7. "*And it was given unto him to make war with the saints.*"—Dan. vii. 21. The rule of this world is at present given to the Antichrist and not yet to the people of God. He shall make war against them and shall be successful. If any believer asks, as the saints of old used to ask (Psalm x. 13, xliv. 9-26, lxxiii.), why God allows His people to be oppressed and the wicked to prosper, the answer is given here. God has given them into the hand of the enemy to try them and purify them and at the end they will be delivered; and even during the trouble He will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able to bear (Job i. 11, 1 Cor. x. 13, St. Luke xxii. 31, 32). The evil which goes on apparently unrebuked in this world is not the result of Fate or Karma, but the working of Satan through his envoy, Antichrist, under the permission accorded here. "It was given to him to make war with the saints."

"*Authority over every tribe, etc.*"—No nation or country is free from the antichristian spirit. The tares grow up everywhere along with the wheat. Evil will not cease until Christ rules in the hearts of men.

8. "*All that dwell on the earth shall worship him.*"—Just as the Roman Empire included the whole of the then known world and every person in it had to worship the Emperor or be held guilty of high treason, so the spirit of Antichrist is found in every country and every age.

"*Every one whose name hath not been written in the book of life.*"—We have no right to suppose from this verse that before each man is born his name is written in a book of life or a book of death, and that he cannot alter his destiny, as some have taught, and as is held by many Mohammedans. If our names are not written in the Book of Life, it will be through our own fault and we ourselves shall be responsible.

If any man hath an ear, let him hear. 9

[1]If any man [2]*is* for captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. 10

1 The Greek text in this verse is somewhat uncertain.
2 Or leadeth *into captivity.*

"*Slain from the foundation of the world.*"—This phrase like iv. 11 "they were and were created" connects the thought of Revelation with that of the Gospel of St. John. It takes us back to the eternal relations of the Father and the Son, and gives us a glimpse of the eternal principle of self-sacrifice inherent in God Himself. If the Word was ever with God, (St. John i. 1) the perfect expression of the Divine nature, so also was He from the foundation of the world giving Himself for the life of the world in accordance with the Divine necessity of His nature Who is Love.

9. "*If any man hath an ear.*"—In this emphatic way attention is called to the rule of patience which is now to be given in the next verse.

10. "*If any man is for captivity, into captivity he goes.*"—St. John was himself in captivity when he wrote these words. The teaching is that the church is not to fight, when persecuted, but to submit. There is also a recollection of the sentence of Jer. xv. 2. "Whither shall we go forth? . . . Such as are for death, to death; . . . . Such as are for captivity, to captivity." The consequence of resistance will only be to intensify the suffering and to have meted out to the Church the same measure she has dealt to others (St. Matt. xxvi. 52). "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." The truth of this was manifested over and over again in the history of the Church, and the conversion of the oppressors when they witnessed the faith of the persecuted not infrequently resulted.

So far we have had the account of the temporal power of the Antichrist; we are now to see the religious side of his organization, and in order to understand it fully we should recall the local conditions of the churches of Asia, for whom this prophecy was first written. The cities of Asia had themselves originated the worship of the Emperor, but the Romans had ultimately seen how it would serve the purposes of the Empire and they entered into a bargain with the temple priests to foster this religion, where possible identifying the Emperor with the local god. The Romans paid for the service by grants to temples and they found the priests ready instruments who would willingly put into operation all the resources of their social system and of their pretended miraculous powers in return for the Roman support. What the Church had to meet, then, was an alliance between the Roman state and the pagan religion; and the combination was most formidable. It required all her faith and patience to endure it. But the interest of the chapter is not exhausted in this local picture. The principle of the alliance of the world power and religion has in various forms and at different times shewn itself in the history of the world. It is in all ages a weapon of Satan, and such a combination is plainly hinted at in 2 Thess. ii. 9 and other passages.

11 And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and
he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.
12 And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his

11—18. THE FALSE PROPHET.

Another beast coming up out of the earth. The characteristics of this beast are that he has horns like a lamb, but the mouth of a dragon; he preaches the worship of the first beast, and does signs and wonders to prove his message. He gives life to the image of the beast and causes all his worshippers to have a sign on their right hand or forehead, without which no one is allowed to buy or sell. The number of the beast is declared to be 666.

11. "*Another beast.*"—The third person of the triad of evil. His work is to bring men under the power of the beast and to preach the religion of the beast. He is innocent in appearance, aping indeed the characteristics of the Lamb, as signified by the two horns of the Lamb but his mouth is the mouth of a dragon, and he speaks the language of Satan. Many conjectures have been made concerning this beast. But as the first beast is the power of the world generally, and in particular the Roman power of St. John's day, so this beast appears to be the church of the world, the organized worship of the Antichristian power on its religious side and in particular the pagan priesthood in Asia Minor. He is not here called a prophet but the title is given him in xix. 20 and his work is that of a prophet, to bring men to the allegiance of his master. We see in the various false religions of the world, and nowhere so plainly as in Asia in the first century, examples of the work of the second beast. His system is a system of boycott; no man who does not profess his religion, may buy or sell. He has his marks; and his sacred seal, in imitation of the religion of Christ. The religions of the world exclude from their communities and even make war against those who keep themselves "unspotted from the world."

"*Out of the earth.*"—The first beast mentioned in verse 1 rose from the sea: this comes from the earth. He rises from among the people of the land. In the time of St. John, as at other times, while the rich had largely discarded religion, the poorer held fast by their superstitions and especially in Asia, were most active in the worship of the Emperor, and readiest to acclaim the miracles with which the clever temple priests supplied their credulous devotees. If the Antichrist of those days came from over the sea (verse 1) his prophet rose from the land of Asia itself. So among the ignorant does the false religion of the world find its deepest root.

"*Horns like a Lamb.*"—This false prophet comes in the guise of Christ, but his speech betrays his origin.

"*He spake as a dragon.*"—That is, as the dragon of chapter xii. He uses the language of Satan. How the dragon speaks is related in Gen. iii. 1-5, "Ye shall not die; ye shall become as gods; ye shall know good and evil."

12. "*He exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight.*"—As prophet commissioned by the Antichrist, he speaks with his authority, even as the prophets of God stand ever before him (1 Kings xvii. 1).

"*Whose death stroke was healed.*"—See on verse 3.

sight. And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death stroke was healed.

And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire 13
to come down out of heaven upon the earth, in the sight of men.

And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason 14
of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, who hath the stroke of the sword, and lived.

And it was given *unto him* to give breath to it, *even* to 15
the image of the beast, [1] that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

And he causeth all, the small and the great, 16
and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there should be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead;

[1] Some ancient authorities read *that even the image of the beast should speak; and he shall cause, etc.*

13. *He doeth great signs.*"—St. Mark xiii. 22; 2 Thess. ii. 9.
"*Fire from heaven.*"—Contrast 1 Kings xviii. 38, 2 Kings i. 10, St. Luke ix. 54.

14. "*He deceiveth.*"—Rev. xii. 9. In Egypt the magicians of Pharaoh (2 Tim. iii. 8) performed miracles and deceived the people. In Asia the temple priests supplied credulous devotees with supposed miraculous works. The extent of the system may be realized from the immense price of the magic books burned in the time of St. Paul at Ephesus (Acts xix. 19).
"*An image of the beast.*"—The special feature of the work of the false religion of St. John's times, when images of the reigning emperor were made and worshipped everywhere. The festivals accompanying the worship of the Emperor were presided over by the Government officials and so the signs were done in St. John's time literally "in the sight of the Beast."

15. "*It was given to give breath to it.*"—One of the commonest temple frauds was to pretend to make images wink and speak, in order to deceive the common people.
"*As many . . . should be killed.*"—Later it was literally true that these Christians who would not worship the Beast (the image of the Emperor), were killed.

16. "*A mark.*"—Such marks both on the forehead and on the arms are familiar as signs of devotion to particular deities. That such marks were adopted by the Emperor-worshippers of the Roman Empire has not been proved. Probably we are intended to understand a diabolical parody of Rev. vii, and of the sealing and protection by God of His servants. But in Eastern religions many parallels may be found.

17 And that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, *even* the name of the beast or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is [1]Six hundred and sixty and six.

[1] Some ancient authorities read *Six hundred and sixteen.*

17. "*No man should be able to buy or sell.*"—See on ii. 9. Trade is the life of the world and the strength of the world's dominion. No man who does not belong to the dominion of the Antichrist may enjoy its privileges. We are familiar with the way that Hinduism and Muhammadanism shut out from the ordinary dealings of life those who have adopted another creed. So it was in the early days. The Christians in Asia Minor were socially ostracized and boycotted, and goods were refused them.

"*Number of his name.*"—That is, the sum total of the numerical equivalents of the letters of his name. In both Greek and Hebrew the letters all have a numerical value. This is the case also in Arabic (the abjad derived from the Phœnicians), and in the Nagari.

18. "*Six hundred and sixty and six.*"—A second reading with good manuscript authority has 616. It is noticeable that both here and in chap. xvii. the Seer appeals to be departing from his ordinary Old Testament symbolism, in order to tell the Christians of his own day some specially significant fact—a fact which only a thoughtful Christian of the time could understand. Before explaining his own symbols he says "Here is wisdom. Let him that understandeth count" . . . and "Here is the intelligence that hath wisdom." There can be little doubt that in both passages the writer is pointing to an historical personage, whom he does not choose to mention more explicitly. Reasons for indicating him in this way can be easily understood from the history of the times, which shows that anything which could be twisted into an accusation against the Christian community would have been at once seized on as a legitimate excuse for destroying many innocent persons. We know that such veiled symbolism was employed in the first century. Thus Babylon was a Christian commonplace for Rome and Our Lord's own name was mentioned under the strange symbol of a fish (Greek ichthus) a word which was made to represent "Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour" mystically. It is not improbable that a symbol for Antichrist is here invented by the writer in the same mystic way. While, however, the fish symbol for Christ and the Babylon symbol for Rome became current coin among the Christians, the symbol for Antichrist seems to have been either forgotten or never taken up, for in the second century only the tradition remained that Nero was implied. Somewhat strikingly both the numbers 666 and 616 can be obtained from the Hebrew numeration of the letters NERO CÆSAR according as the first word is spelt Neron or Nero. It is therefore not impossible that this may have been the original solution intended, and the name would suit the passage, for it was Nero who first began the persecution of the Christians and whose ferocity was thought to have descended upon Domitian, the reigning Emperor. It has also been suggested that the triple six

XIV. And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the 1
mount Zion, and with him an hundred and forty and four
thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father,
written on their foreheads.

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many 2
waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice
which I heard *was* as *the voice* of harpers harping with their
harps:

And they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and 3
before the four living creatures and the elders; and no man
could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four
thousand, *even* they that had been purchased out of the earth.

represents the falling short of the triple perfection which would have been perhaps represented in the Revelation by 777. In the Sybilline oracles by a different system of notation, 8 is taken for the supremely perfect number, and 888 is definitely given as the name of Christ. The number 666 may therefore have been adopted for both these reasons.

XIV. 1—5. THE CHURCH IN HER PLACE PREPARED OF GOD.

On Mount Zion are seen the 144,000 with the Lamb. They alone can hear and learn the song of heaven. They are undefiled and without blemish.

1. "*The Lamb standing on mount Zion.*"—Mount Zion on earth is idealized as the seat of the Lamb, the King of the House of David. (Is. xxiv. 23). In contrast to the Beast and his kingdom, the Lamb occupies the seat of the true Kingdom. (Heb. xii. 22.) There is possibly a contrast between the Lamb standing with His white-robed followers on the sacred mount Zion and the Harlot seated on the Beast, clothed in scarlet, having the names of blasphemy, whose throne is Babylon with its seven hills (xvii).

"*A hundred and forty and four thousand.*"—See notes on vii. 1-8.

"*His name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads.*"—Rev. iii. 12; vii. 2; xxii. 4 and notes. In contrast to the Antichrist's parody of God's seal, the 144,000 are described as bearing the name of God and of the Lamb on their foreheads. The writing of the name of God and of the Lamb suggests the "imparting of a character which corresponds with the mind of God and the consecration of life to His service." (Swete).

2. "*A voice from heaven.*"—This is the voice of the heavenly host who join with the redeemed in singing God's praises. This thought is witnessed in the Holy Communion when we say "Therefore with Angels and Archangels and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee and saying Holy, Holy, Holy.

"*Many waters.*"—i. 15 and note.

"*Great thunder.*"—x. 4 and note, vi. 1.

"*Harpers.*"—xv. 2.

3. "*A new song.*"—Cp. v. 9 and notes. The new song belongs to the ransomed creation. We have here a vivid picture of the Communion of

These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These *are* they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, *to be* the first fruits unto God and unto the Lamb.

heaven and earth (Heb. xii. 23). The song is sung *before* the living creatures and the elders, not by them. Thus the angelic host here lead the new song which the redeemed on earth have only imperfectly learned, just as they led the new song on the first Christmas morning, singing, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good pleasure among men" (St. Luke ii. 13, 14).

"*Could learn that song.*"—"Even the 144,000 have need to learn the song; it does not come naturally, or without effort; every Eucharist, every thankful meditation on the Passion, is an exercise in the art. And only they can learn it; the music of the heart cannot be acquired without a receptivity which is a Divine gift." (Swete). Cp. St. John xiv. 17, 1 Cor. ii. 14.

"*Purchased out of the earth.*"—1-5 and notes.

4. 5. The qualifications for admission to the sacred number of redeemed are given.—

(1) Purity. They are not defiled.
(2) Obedience. They follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.
(3) Redemption. They were purchased from among men.
(4) Truth. In their mouth was found no lie.

4. "*They which were not defiled with women.*" The whole character of the Book makes it necessary to take this symbolically of inward purity, not in any sense as a condemnation of marriage. The latter is everywhere upheld in the New Testament in the highest terms as essentially a pure and holy and honourable estate. (Heb. xiii. 4.) The symbol is probably taken originally from the Levitical ordinances as to approach to God, an ordinance which was a ritual command of early times to denote the need of purity in drawing near to the awful presence of Jehovah. (Exod. xix. 15, 1 Sam. xxi. 4.) It means therefore that the 144,000 are pure hearted and spotless and worthy of entrance into the Divine Presence. Cp. for a symbolical figure of the same type 1 Cor. xi. 26. "That I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ" and Eph. v. 27 "glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing . . . holy and without blemish." For the general thought compare St. Matt. v. 3, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" and 1 John iii. 2, "We shall see Him as He is" and "every one that hath this hope purifieth himself even as He is pure." Purity of word and thought and act are among the essential qualifications for a Christian (Eph. v. 3-5.) In a country where impure conversation is very lightly thought of, this, the first characteristic of the redeemed, cannot be too strongly laid to heart.

"*They which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.*"—vii. 17 and notes. The following of the Lamb is the Imitation of Christ. This may involve intense suffering and even martyrdom itself. The 144,000 are the heroic bodyguard of the Lamb, ready to follow Him even to Calvary. They do not hesitate, even when suffering and death confront them, but

And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without 5
blemish.

And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having an 6
eternal gospel to proclaim unto them that [1]dwell
on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe 1 Gr. *sit.*
and tongue and people;

keep close to their Lord. This was true of the Christians of the first age. Let us see to it that it is true of Christians to-day.

"*First-fruits unto God.*"—Cp. Rom. xvi. 5. The 144,000 are the beginning of Christ's harvest. As we have seen in chapter vii. they probably represent the chosen Christians of the first age who gave up their lives for their Lord and were the first-fruits of the Church of the Roman Empire. But the further thought suggests itself that there are the first-fruits of the new churches who are called to follow Christ whithersoever He goeth to-day. No one can read of the wonderful constancy, even unto death, of the Chinese Christians during the Boxer riots without feeling sure that a wonderful harvest will be reaped after such first-fruits have appeared. In India we have not to face the "martyrdom of death," but we have often to face the "martyrdom of life"—a lifelong struggle to keep our faith pure and our ideal high amid the most difficult surroundings. God has called us to the most wonderful privilege of being His first-fruits, His chosen ones, in this great country: let us be pure-hearted and brave and self-sacrificing, ready to follow the Lamb, "whithersoever He goeth."

5. "*In their mouth was found no lie.*"—For their Lord is truth (St. John xiv. 6, 1 Pet. ii. 22). But we may connect the thought with their inward purity also. They are pure and therefore true.

"*They are without blemish.*"—To be truthful is to be without blemish and to be untruthful is to be blemished. This further description of the 144,000 corroborates the interpretation already given of verse 4. The word 'unblemished' (used of the church in Eph. v. 27) refers to the spotless sacrifice which alone was acceptable under the Law. In the sacrifice of man's work to God, the purity of the offering is often spoilt by vanity or selfishness.

6—13. THE THREE PROCLAMATIONS BY ANGELS AND THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN.

The first angel flies in the midst of heaven with the everlasting gospel to proclaim to men; the second proclaims the fall of Babylon; the third warns those who worship the Beast or his image or receive his mark, of the punishment in store for them, and while St. John is writing and commenting on this, he hears a voice from heaven bidding him write the Beatitude of those who die in the Lord.

6. "*Another angel flying in mid heaven, having an eternal gospel to proclaim.*"—This preaching of the gospel is not that which was commanded by Christ to His disciples, for it is simply a command to worship God the Creator. This is the eternal law which is the foundation of the whole moral law and is here preached in order that men may turn from the worship of idols and of Antichrist. In one sense this gospel has been

And he saith with a great voice, Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters.

And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, which hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a

and is being preached wherever God by manifestations of His power calls men to turn to Him. Its special proclamation here in the days of the Antichrist is called forth by the idol-worship of the Roman Emperor and by the claims of Antichrist to be the God of the world.

"*Eternal.*"—This Gospel is everlasting, for it is the eternal command to serve the everlasting and unchangeable Creator. It is also eternal as contrasted with the transitoriness of the promises of Antichrist.

7. "*Fear God.*"—Ecc. xii. 13.

"*Give him glory.*"—The detected thief Achan who had sacrificed himself and his people for some silver and a Babylonish garment, was thus admonished by Joshua (Josh. vii. 19, Cp. St. John ix. 24). The command is very necessary in a world which is praising the Antichrist with praise belonging to God (xii. 4) and worshipping his image.

"*The hour of his judgment is come.*"—Acts xvii. 31. The punishment is now about to fall upon Babylon.

8. "*Fallen, fallen is Babylon.*"—Quoted from Isaiah xxi. 9 and repeated in Rev. xviii. 2 where see notes. The mystical use of the name Babylon to signify the seat of the dominion of the world was familiar to the Jews and the Christians. In 1 Pet. v. 13 we have an instance of its use for Rome, which is almost certain. There can be no doubt about Rev. xvii. and xviii. The description of the city as built on seven hills is a wholly convincing proof that Rome, the seat of the god of the world, the Emperor, is intended. But wherever the power of the world is worshipped, there is Babylon. The name is mystical and refers to characteristics which are to be found more or less in every great city. The subject will be found discussed in the notes on xvii. 5.

"*Wine of the wrath of her fornication.*"—There are two cups of wine united, as it were, in one. She made all nations drink of the wine of her fornication, but the cup becomes in the end the cup of the wine of God's wrath (Jer. li. 7, Ps. lxxv. 8).

"*Fornication*" is used frequently in the prophets to mean "running after another God" (Hosea i. ii.) Whenever a person or city is willing to sell honour for gain, there is the spirit of fornication. Whether it be displayed in acquiescence in what we know to be wrong, in order not to lose some advantage, or in the promotion of a worship in which we have ceased to believe, for fear of unpopularity or persecution if we refuse, or in actual sin which so abounds wherever the Antichrist holds rule, or in the grinding of the poor and the breaking of the laws of God in order to make money, there is fornication as understood by the prophets. It is the characteristic of the Antichrist's kingdom (Rev. xiii. 17, "No man should be able to buy or sell save he that hath the mark of the Beast)."

great voice, If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand,

He also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which **10** is [1]prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brim- 1 Gr. *mingled.* stone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

And the smoke of their torment goeth up[2] for ever and **11** ever; and they have no rest day and night, they 2 Gr. *unto ages of ages.* that worship the beast and his image, and whoso receiveth the mark of his name.

Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the com- **12** mandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

10. "*He also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger.*"—Ps. lxxv. 8. The cup was represented before (verse 8) as the cup belonging to Babylon, but there is no contradiction, for the sins that men do, become also their punishments, and so the cup of fornication is also the cup of wrath. It is unmixed, that is, not diluted with water but with all its fiery strength.

"*Wrath of God.*"—Punishment is not a mere impersonal law of consequences by which every deed has its fruit or *karma* which must be worked out; but God himself hears the cry of the oppressed and sees the wickedness of the oppressor and personally delivers His own righteous judgment.

"*Fire and brimstone.*"—See ix. 18 and notes. Isaiah xxx. 33. This was the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness and impurity of old.

"*In the presence . . . .*"—The presence of holiness and goodness intensifies the horror of the picture The Lord who died for the sins of men, the Lamb as it had been slain, is now face to face with those who have denied and rejected Him. The remorse which is felt by a sinner in the presence of goodness, may be the meaning of the symbol 'fire and brimstone' and 'the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever.' In any case they are spiritual symbols and not to be taken literally.

11. "*The smoke of their torment.*"—Gen. xix. 28. The city which was destroyed by fire and brimstone because of its impurity supplies the imagery.

"*They have no rest day nor night.*"—Isaiah lvii. 21. Contrast the rest which is promised to those that die in the Lord (verse 13) and the ceaseless praise of the living creatures, who rest not day nor night (iv. 8).

12. "*Here is the patience of the saints.*"—This phrase is repeated from xiii. 10 and forms a link in a line of thought which runs through the second part of Revelation. This thought is the final vindication and justification of the endurance and suffering of the Church; and not only the vindication but the triumph and the abiding nature of the acts of the saints. In vi. 11 we see the souls of those who were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus under the altar, not yet vindicated and not yet

13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them.

1 Or *in the Lord. From henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit.*

enjoying the fruit of their labours. They are given their rest but are bidden to wait till their brethren are fulfilled. In chap. xi. we see the two witnesses giving their testimony and then slain by the Beast. Their lives had apparently ended in failure, but in the end they triumph; they rise from the dead, and ascend to heaven and their enemies behold with great fear and give glory to God, and so the witnesses are not only vindicated in the sight of men but enjoy the fruits of their witness and labour in the effect which their ascension has upon those who behold it. What is true of the witnesses in xi. is also true of the Church in the second part of the book. In xiii. 10 the Church has to suffer the persecution of Antichrist without resisting, and her mission seems a failure in the face of the success which attends Satan's deputy. But here in xiv. 12 we have the vindication. The enemy is tormented; the Church is vindicated. She had trusted in God and was not confounded. As always, the Church in this too follows in the steps of her Lord, Who suffered and was buried; but was vindicated by the resurrection which proclaimed Him the Holy One of God.

"*The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*"—i. 2, St. James ii. 1. The result of the commandments and faith of Antichrist has now been made manifest; the saints keep the faith of Jesus.

13. "*Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.*"—This beatitude, pronounced, we may well believe, by Him Who had blessed the mourners when on earth, abolishes failure and despair for Christians. The Antichrist has established his reign of terror; the saints silently endure persecution and death. But from that very moment (from henceforth) when they seem to have failed and have been defeated by Satan, they are blessed and their triumph is assured.

"*They rest from their labours.*"—The difference between these labours and the works mentioned immediately afterwards should be observed. They rest from trouble and sorrow, from anxiety and distress. These things may accompany our work on earth, but they are only temporary and the great sabbath rest brings respite from them.

"*Their works follow with them.*"—The work remains. It abides for ever. (1 Cor. iii. 13, etc.) Even in this world we see work abiding and influence remaining. The corn of wheat falls into the earth and dies; but, by dying, it brings forth much fruit. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. Have we not seen it in our own generation in the Church of Uganda? The seed sown in tears, even in blood, by Hannington, Mackay, Pilkington and others was not lost; they live in their works; they rejoice over the abundant harvest which has been vouchsafed. If that is true now, how true and glorious will be its realization in the grand climax of all when Christ shall come Himself to see the travail of His soul and be satisfied! Then His saints shall live and reign with Him (xx. 4 and note). So important is this truth that it is accompanied by a special command

And I saw, and behold, a white cloud; and on the cloud 14
I saw one sitting like unto [1]a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

[1] Or *the Son.*

And another angel came out from the temple, crying with 15
a great voice to him that sat on the cloud, Send forth thy sickle, and reap: for the hour to reap is come; for the harvest of the earth is [2]over-ripe.

[2] Gr. *dried up.*

And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth; 16
and the earth was reaped.

to write and by a special affirmation of the Spirit, interrupting, as it were, the saying which was gi en.

14–20. The Harvest and the Vintage.

A second vision of the Coming of Christ.—(See xi. 15-19). As a Son of man He appears on a white cloud with a sharp sickle and receives the command from the temple to reap the harvest and He does so. Then follows an angel from the temple, and he receives a command from an angel from the altar to thrust in his sickle also, to reap the vine of the earth. He does so and casts it into the winepress of the wrath of God, and the winepress is trodden outside the city and the blood comes out to 1600 furlongs.

14. "*Behold a white cloud.*"—We have now reached the second account of the coming of Christ. The suffering of the saints is now come to an end and appropriately a Son of man appears on a cloud as He had told His enemies at the time of His suffering that they should see Him coming on the clouds of heaven (St. Matt. xxvi. 64).

"*A golden crown.*"—Cp. xi. 15. The crown is the crown of victory. In the Roman Empire the victors wore the Imperial crown, and the Son of man is crowned in contrast to the usurping Antichrist, whom He has conquered: He comes, victorious after suffering, to reap the harvest of His saints who have won the victory through suffering.

"*A sharp sickle*"—With it He fulfils all the prophecies of the harvest time; St. Matt. xiii. 30, St. John iv. 36, Joel iii. 13.

15. "*Another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice.*"—The command to reap is brought from the Father, the Lord of the Harvest (St. Matt. ix. 38) when the hour comes.

"*Send forth thy sickle.*"—It has been well remarked that in the command to reap the harvest of the just, the sickle is not called *sharp*, for the sting of death is past and the coming of the Son of Man has no terrors for His followers; but when the clusters of the vine of the wicked are reaped, the command is, 'Send forth thy sharp sickle."

"*The hour to reap is come.*"—The hour which the disciples wished to find out (Acts i. 6-7) and which Christ Himself did not know when He was on earth (St Mark xiii. 32).

16. "*The earth was reaped.*"—This is, as we have seen, only the wheat harvest,—the good who are reaped by the Son of Man Himself. The vintage of the wicked follows immediately.

17 And another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, he that hath power over fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

19 And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the [1]vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great *winepress*, of the wrath of God.

1 Gr. *vine*.

20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

17. "*Another angel . . . from the temple.*"—St. Matt. xiii. 30, 41. "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling and them that do iniquity." (Joel iii. 13).

18. "*Another angel . . . from the altar.*"—The angel who gave the command for the harvest of the just came from the temple, for the just are the temple of the Lord and they shall go no more out from His presence. The angel who gives the command for the vintage of the unjust comes from the altar where the souls of the martyrs cry 'How long, O Lord'? The winepress is trodden outside the city, just as in the Old Testament to be cast outside the camp was a symbol of uncleanness and separation from God's people. It is noticeable that while Christ Himself gathers in the wheat harvest of the chosen ones, it is an angel who treads out the winepress.

"*Fully ripe.*"—The harvest of the earth was mature and the iniquity of the wicked is also full (Gen. xv. 16).

19. "*The vintage of the earth.*"—Cp. Isaiah lxiii. 3. 4, Lam. i. 15.

20. "*The winepress* (of the wrath of God) *was trodden without the city.* Cp. for the metaphor verse 10. 'They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.'

"*Blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses.*"—The blood of the slain (we now have the metaphor of battle as well as the metaphor of the winepress) reaches to the bridles of the horses of those who follow Christ. Rev. xix. 14. Cp. Isai. lxiii. 3. "Their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments, and I have stained all my raiment."

"*A thousand six hundred furlongs.*"—The number here is difficult to explain, though it clearly has a symbolic meaning. The number sixteen, the square of four, is probably used to denote the fact that the vintage of wrath is reaped on every side of the city, the city lying four-square. The number is intensified in vastness and indefiniteness by the addition of the two ciphers.

The city here is the Holy City, Jerusalem idealized, no longer trodden down by the Gentiles, but the abode of the Saints.

XV. And I saw another sign in heaven, great and mar- 1
vellous, seven angels having seven plagues, *which are* the last,
for in them is finished the wrath of God.

And I saw as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire; and 2
them that come victorious from the beast, and
from his image, and from the number of his
name, standing [1]by the glassy sea, having harps of God.

[1] Or *upon.*

XV-XVI.—THE SEVEN BOWLS OF THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES.

Another sign in heaven. Seven angels with the seven final plagues appear. The multitude of those who are getting the victory over the Beast stand by the sea of glass singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. Then the temple of the tabernacle is opened and the seven angels come forth and receive from one of the four living creatures the seven bowls full of the wrath of God and smoke fills the temple so that no one can enter. They are then commanded to pour out the bowls. The first angel pours on the earth and there comes a grievous sore on those who worship the Beast The second pours on the sea and it becomes blood. The third pours on the fountains of waters and the judgment is approved by the angel of the waters and by the altar. The fourth pours on the sun, and men are scorched but they blaspheme and repent not. The fifth pours on the seat of the Beast and darkness envelopes his kingdom and men blaspheme God for their pains and repent not. The sixth pours on Euphrates and the water is dried up for the kings of the east, and evil spirits go forth from the Devil's triad to summon all men to war against God. Christ warns men that He is coming as a thief, but they gather themselves at Har Magedon. The seventh pours on the air and a voice from the Temple proclaims the end. A great earthquake follows and Babylon is rent in three parts and every island and mountain is shaken and great hail falls on the earth.

1. "*I saw another sign.*"—In xii such words begin a fresh vision arising out of, but not continuing the events of the last chapter. Similarly this vision is an expansion of the warnings given by the angels in xiv. 7.

"*Seven plagues, which are the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God.*"—The seals and trumpets had only begun the wrath of God, for, as we saw in viii. ix, the judgments were not complete. Now the complete judgment is poured out from the bowls. When the last bowl is emptied the angel makes the announcement, It is done.

2. "*A glassy sea mingled with fire.*"—A song of thanksgiving preceded the opening of the book (v. and vi.), and a silence and offering of incense the blowing of the trumpets (viii. 1-5); so here the song of the victorious saints precedes the pouring out of the bowls. The fiery sea may represent the fires of persecution from which they have escaped. They come forth in a new Exodus out of the spiritual Egypt with its tyranny and persecution. The Red Sea of martyrdom is now far below their feet, as they stand on the crystal sea of Heaven itself and sing the song of Moses 'Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously,' and of the Lamb 'To him that loved us and loosed us from

3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the [1]ages.

1 Many ancient authorities read *nations*.

4 Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy righteous acts have been made manifest.

5 And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

our sins and made us a Kingdom and Priests, be the power and the glory. Amen.'

"*Them that come victorious.*"—The present tense is used; lit. "them that were getting the victory." They come up, one by one, out of the fiery sea of persecution on to the crystal sea of heaven, as they accomplish their martyrdom. Their brethren are still on earth engaged in the struggle and their number is constantly being recruited by new martyrs. Cp. vii. 9 and following verses.

"*Harps of God.*"—The Greek word is the same as "sitar," the well known Indian instrument. They are described as harps of God, because they are attuned to the song of the Lamb. The symbol has been explained to represent "hearts tuned to praise."

3. "*The song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.*" Exod. xv. The song of victory, which Moses taught the Israelites on the shores of the Red Sea, the saints sing by the sea of glass in heaven, while plagues, such as fell on Egypt, fall on the earth. The song is a song of victory and acknowledgment of the power of God and gathers together many parts of the Old and New Testaments.

Great and marvellous are thy works, Ps. cxi. 2, cxxxix. 14, *just and true are thy ways*, Psalm cxlv. 17, Deut. xxxii. 4, *thou King of Ages*, 1 Tim. i. 17, *who shall not fear?* Jer. x. 7. Contrast the praise of the Beast whom they had overcome, xiii. 4.

"*King of Ages*"—As each great age in the world's history goes by, God the Holy and the True directs and rules its course. In the Christian view of the ages (or *yugs*) of the world, there is no cycle ending in deterioration (Kalyug) but always upward progress under the King of the Ages.

"*Holy.*"—This word which represents God as faithful, fulfilling His obligations, is only used of God again in xvi. 5.

"*Righteous acts.*"—As in xix. 8: or "ordinances" as often in the LXX. Men often think that God has forgotten, but in the end His righteous acts are always made manifest.

5. "*The temple of the tabernacle.*"—The shrine where the ark of the covenant was kept. The covenant whereby God vindicates right and punishes wrong is here shown in heaven, before the pouring out of His final judgments, xi. 19.

And there came out from the temple the seven angels that 6
had the seven plagues, arrayed[1] with *precious*
stone, pure *and* bright, and girt about their
breasts with golden girdles.

[1] Many ancient authorities read *in linen.*

And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven 7
angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of
God, who liveth [2]for ever and ever.

[2] Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, 8
and from his power; and none was able to enter into the
temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be
finished.

6. "*Seven angels arrayed with precious stone.*"—More probably we should read for "stone" "linen." A difference of one letter turns the Greek accusative lithon, stone, into linon, linen. The word "precious" inserted in the English to avoid the violence of the metaphor is not in the Greek. Those who adopt the reading "stone" refer to Ezek. xxviii. 13. "Every precious stone was thy covering," and to the description of the High Priest's breastplate. In xix. 8 the same adjectives "pure and bright" are applied to the linen raiment of the Church and the parallel is more remarkable because the linen is there said to be the righteous acts of the Saints. The only other place where the word for "righteous acts" (dikaiomata) occurs in the Rev. is in verse 4 of the present chapter. If the fine linen of the Church is the "righteous acts" in xix. 8, may not the "righteous acts" of xv. 4 be represented in this place by the pure and white linen garments of the angels, who are to make them manifest? We may note that the messengers of the vengeance in Ezek. ix. 3, foll. are also arrayed in fine linen.

"*Girt . . . with golden girdles.*"—The girdle of faithfulness matching the robe of righteous acts. See i. 13, and notes.

7. "*One of the four living creatures gave. . . seven bowls full of the wrath of God.*"—The representative of creation is the minister of the punishment of creation. The bowl is the flat-shaped vessel in common use in the East. Such a bowl is mentioned in v. 8 as full of incense representing the prayers of the Saints. This is a third symbol of judgment. We have had before (1) the judgment of the trumpets (viii. 5). fire cast upon the earth from a golden censer; and (2) in xiv. 8 the cup of the wine of the wrath of God: and here (3) we have bowls of wrath given by one of the living creatures. Similarly the avengers, clothed in linen, receive fire from the cherubim or living creatures in Ezek. ix. 5, x. 6.

"*Who liveth for ever and ever.*"—Cp. i. 17, iv. 9 and note. God lives, but the idols of the heaven are dumb and dead. 1 Thess. i. 9, Heb. x. 31. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

8. "*The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God.*"—Another reference to the Exodus (xl. 35). The cloud overshadowed the tabernacle and Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle. So now the judgment is to fall on the earth and the cloud darkens the sanctuary; no one can enter the temple till the plagues are fulfilled, for there is

1 XVI. And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go ye, and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.

2 And the first went, and poured out his bowl into the earth; and [1]it became a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and which worshipped his image.

[1] Or *there came.*

now no atonement to be made. The hour of judgment has come. The bowls are the final judgments of God. Cp. Ezek. x. 4; 1 Kings viii. 10, 11.

XVI. 1. The seven bowls correspond generally with the seven trumpets of chapters viii. and ix; but in the case of the bowls the judgment is final, while in the case of the trumpets it is partial; again men are not attacked till the fifth trumpet, but the judgment of the first bowl falls on them. There are some differences which should be noted.

	Bowls.	Trumpets.	Plagues of Egypt.
1st	A grievous sore.	Hail and fire.	6th Plague of boils.
2nd	Sea turned to blood.	Sea to blood.	1st Nile to blood.
3rd	Rivers to blood.	Rivers to wormwood.	1st Nile to blood.
4th	Sun scorching men.	Sun losing power.	9th Darkness.
5th	Kingdom of Beast darkened and pain for men.	Locusts arising from the abyss.	9th Darkness.
6th	Euphrates dried for the kings of the east.	Euphrates angels loosed with their armies.	....
7th	Proclamation of the end; earthquake and hail.	Proclamation of the Kingdom of Christ.	7th Great hail.

1. "*A great voice out of the temple.*"—As no one was able to enter the temple till the judgment was accomplished, this must be understood to be the voice of God. He spoke also from the sanctuary to Samuel. 1 Sam. iii. Cp. St. Mat. iii. 17; xvii. 5; St. John. xii. 28.

"*Pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.*"—These judgments are not warnings, as the trumpets were, but the final judgments of God. (xv. 1.)

2. "*The first went and poured out his bowl into the earth.*"—The first trumpet gave hail and fire. The first bowl is poured into the earth and a grievous sore breaks out on men who worship the Beast. So when Moses cast ashes of the furnace towards heaven, boils broke out among the Egyptians and even the magicians were not exempt, but were unable to stand before Pharaoh because of the boils, Exod. ix. 11. This judgment falls upon the worshippers of the Beast exclusively. Their very self-indulgence is often the cause of such a plague to those who worship the world and its impure pleasures.

And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and [1]it became blood as of a dead man; and every [2]living soul died, *even* the things that were in the sea. 3

And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountain of the waters; [3]and it became blood. 4

And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Righteous art thou, which art and which wast, thou Holy One, because thou didst thus [4]judge: 5

For they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and blood hast thou given them to drink: they are worthy. 6

And I heard the altar saying, Yea, O Lord God, the Al- 7
mighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

1 Or *here came.*
2 Gr. *soul of life.*
3 Some ancient authorities read *and they became.*
4 Or *judge.*
Because they . . . prophets, thou hast given them blood also to drink.

3. "*The second poured out his bowl into the sea.*"—The sea from which the Beast rose (xiii. 1) is next judged. It becomes as the blood of a dead man. It is not the blood of the living but the clotting and corrupting blood of a corpse (Exod. vii. 21). The sea was the highway for the rich merchandise of the kingdom of the Beast (Rev. xviii. 17-19), and it becomes the means of destruction.

4. "*The third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of waters.*"—Cp. Exod. vii. 21; 2 Kings iii. 23.

5. "*I heard the angel of the waters.*"—In vii. 1 we have the angels of the winds; in ix. 14 angels of the Euphrates; in xiv. 18 an angel of fire; so here an angel presiding over the rivers and waters. But they are all under the power of God and no angel in the Revelation will receive any worship or special honour, xix. 10, xxii. 9. This should be noted in view of the false comparisons which are often made in modern Hinduism between the 'devas' and the angelic powers. The 'devas' are worshipped by Hindus. Christians are absolutely forbidden to worship any being except God Himself.

"*Righteous art thou, which art and wast, thou Holy One.*"—Cp. i. 4, and notes, and xi. 17. The word for holy is only used again of God in xv. 4 (where see note). A further proof that these are the final judgments is given in the omission of the words 'and art to come.'

6. "*They poured out the blood of saints and prophets.*"—vi. 10, xi. 7, xvii. 6, St. Matt. xxiii. 29, 34-37; Rev. xiii. 7. As always, the sins of men become their judgment and those who had delighted in blood are given blood to drink. Num. xi. 19, 20 illustrates this principle.

"*They are worthy.*"—Their singular wickedness merited this singular punishment.

7. "*I heard the altar saying.*"—The altar is here personified. Under it had lain the souls of the martyrs (vi. 9); on it had been offered the prayers of the saints; viii. 3. The two altars symbolize the sacrifices and the prayers of the saints, and so the altar, in the name of those sacrifices and prayers, assents to the justice of the punishment.

8 And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given unto [1]it to scorch men with fire.

1 Or *him.*

9 And men were scorched with great heat: and they blasphemed the name of the God which hath the power over these plagues; and they repented not to give him glory.

10 And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

11 And they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works.

12 And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the *river* Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that *come* from the sunrising.

8. "*The fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun.*"—As the fourth trumpet brought a judgment on the sun, so does the fourth bowl; but in the first case the light of the sun is diminished, here the sun scorches men with fire.

9. "*They blasphemed the name of God.*"—The horror of this plague and the proneness of sufferers to blaspheme the name of God because of it, need no comment in a tropical country. The frequent note that men repented not is paralleled by the history of the Exodus and the continual hardening of Pharaoh's heart, Exod. vii. 13, 22; viii. 19, 32; ix. 7, 12, 35; x. 20, 27; xi. 10, xiv. 4. There comes a time in the course of continued resistance to God's will, when each successive punishment becomes only a means of hardening the sufferer, and then God Himself gives him the hardness which he had chosen as his attitude. Isaiah vi. 10; Rev. xxii. 11.

10. "*The fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast.*"—There is no pause after the fourth bowl, as after the fourth seal and trumpets; God's judgments are now final and complete.

The throne of the Beast must mean his imperial city, whether Rome or Babylon. The darkness which fell upon his city recalls the ninth plague of the Exodus. A description of the plague of darkness and the terrors which the Egyptians suffered, is given in the Book of Wisdom xvii.

11. "*They blasphemed the God of heaven.*"—Cp. verse 9. The pains and sores are apparently those of the earlier plagues, and not a new plague connected with the darkness.

12. "*The great river, the river Euphrates.*"—See ix. 14 and notes. As the sixth trumpet was connected with Euphrates, so also is the sixth bowl. Here the way is to be made clear for the destruction of Babylon, and, as was the case when Cyrus took Babylon in the Old Testament history, Euphrates is dried up. Cp. Isaiah xliv. 27 "The Lord, that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers; that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd." When Cyrus took Babylon, he diverted the river Euphrates and marched in its empty bed into the city. Cp. also Isaiah xi. 15. What is

And I saw *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out 13
of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false
prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs:

For they are spirits of [1]devils, working signs; 14
which go forth [2]unto the kings of the whole
[3]world, to gather them together unto the war of
the great day of God, the Almighty.

1 Gr. *demons.*
2 Or *upon.*
3 Gr. *inhabited earth.*

(Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and 15
keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his
shame.)

symbolized here would seem to be the removal of a barrier which had checked the progress of events (see Swete).

"*The kings that come from the sunrising.*"—Apparently what is in the Seer's mind, is that great hosts from the east, such as have from time to time swept over Europe, are again to come to destroy Babylon as a last plague upon the earth. This judgment ends in destruction both for conquerors and conquered, for the Lord Himself will destroy the vast army, with which they win their victory.

"*The false prophet.*"—This is the first time he is so named, but there is no doubt from the description that the second Beast of chapter xiii is intended. At the same time the Seer may have in his mind some personal manifestation of the second Beast such as Apollonius of Tyana.

14. "*Spirits of devils working signs.*"—False miracles are mentioned in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. 1 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Thess. ii. 9. The emissaries of the Devil's triad go from king to king persuading them to war against the Lord and working miracles as a proof of their mission. Two great motives for war are represented by the Antichrist and his prophet, namely, the lust of power and the pride of a false religion. It is these which urge the nations to war.

"*The great day of God.*"—Zeph. i. 14; Joel ii. 1. The battle is a frequent symbol of the final contest between God and the powers of evil. Joel iii. 9—11; Jer. xlvi. 10; Ezek. xxxviii. 7.

15. "*Behold I come as a thief.*"—A message from Christ in reply to the false persuasion of the evil spirits. If it were possible they would deceive the very elect. To warn the elect Christ speaks. He comes as thief, in a way and at a time when men do not expect Him. Cp. St. Matt. xxiv. 43; St. Luke xii. 39; 1 Thess. v. 2. Men are tempted to reject the message of Christ because it comes in a way and at a time they do not expect; they refuse to recognize it because it does not fulfil their own ideas, as the Jews rejected Christ because He did not come with worldly glory and power. So at the end too, Christ will come when men are not looking for Him.

"*Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments.*"—The servant expected by his master to be ready on his return would be much ashamed to be found unprepared, without uniform, and not watching. So when His Master comes, the Christian must be clad in white robes (iii. 3—5) and be like the wise virgins ready to meet Him.

16 And they gathered them together into the place which is called in the Hebrew Har-Magedon.

17 And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done:

18 And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since [1]there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty.

[1] Some ancient authorities read *there was a man.*

19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21 And great hail, *every stone* about the weight of a talent,

16. "*The place which is called in the Hebrew Har-Magedon.*"—The famous battle field in North Palestine is chosen to typify the site of the great battle of the end. It was here that Deborah and Barak defeated the hosts of Sisera (Judges iv. v), and that Jehu slew Ahaziah (2 Kings ix), and here too that Josiah met his death at the hands of Pharaoh Necho in the battle which finally reduced Judah to a subject state. The plain thus became to the Jews the type of a great battle field, somewhat in the way that Panipat has become in India. The name of the place is here used symbolically, just as Edom and Sodom have been used in earlier chapters. Cp. Ezek. xxxix. 2—4.

17. "*The seventh poured out his bowl upon the air.*"—The seventh and final judgment corresponds with the proclamation of the Kingdom at the end of the eleventh chapter and with the harvest of the fourteenth, as well as with the coming of the Word of God in chapter xix. It is poured upon the air, for Satan is the prince of the power of the air (Eph. ii. 2) and his kingdom is now to be destroyed.

"*It is done.*"—As on the cross Jesus proclaimed the accomplishment of His redeeming work, so here God from His temple proclaims the accomplishment of the work of judgment. Cp. xxi. 6.

19. "*The great city.*"—A partial judgment on the city is related in xi. 13. Here the whole cleaves asunder. The city is of course the city of Babylon, the mystic capital of the Beast (see xvii. 5 and notes, and xiv. 8), but the judgment affects the whole world (see verse 20).

"*Cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.*"—See xiv. 8, 10 and notes.

20. "*Every island.*"—vi. 14 and note.

21. "*A talent.*"—A weight of about 1½ maunds. Such hail would destroy every building and kill every man on whom it fell. Cp. Exod. ix. the seventh plague of Egypt.

cometh down out of heaven upon men: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof is exceeding great.

XVII. And there came one of the seven angels that had the 1
seven bowls, and spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters;

"*Men blasphemed God.*"—See verse 9 and note. Men's obstinacy is final and has called forth God's final judgment.

One aspect of this chapter should be noted. The judgments are a series of natural phenomena which men would ascribe to natural causes and not to God's overruling Providence; thus they do not recognize the hand which smites them but blaspheme His name. It is a lesson of the way in which God visits men, and of the way in which they fail to recognize Him.

XVII-XIX. THE HARLOT AND THE BEAST; THE BRIDE AND CHRIST.

XVII. THE HARLOT AND THE BEAST.

XVII. 1-6. THE VISION OF THE HARLOT BABYLON.

One of the seven angels who had the bowls comes to the Apostle and summons him to see the Harlot which sitteth on many waters. He finds her in the wilderness sitting on the Beast who now appears as scarlet coloured. The woman is dressed as a harlot, with a golden cup in her hand full of abominations, and on her head her name, Mystery, Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth.

1. "*There came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls.*"—A new vision now begins. Babylon has been mentioned by name in chapter xiv. 8 and by implication in xi. 8. In xiv. 8 and xvi. 19 the doom of Babylon is pronounced and its utter destruction is here related. This is the scene which one of the seven avenging angels summons the Apostle to witness.

"*The great harlot that sitteth on many waters.*"—The Harlot is Babylon (verse 5) and the many waters are "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues" (verse 15). Babylon is called a harlot, for she has sold her honour and herself for gain. (See xiv. 8 and note). The same language is used of Tyre, at one time the greatest seaport of the Mediterranean (Isaiah xxiii. 15, 16), and of Nineveh (Nahum iii. 4). The symbol is also often used for a city which forsakes the true God and worships idols. It is applied to Jerusalem in Isaiah i. 21; Jer. ii. 20. But apart from any spiritual interpretation, the vice of great cities makes the name terribly apt.

"*Many waters.*"—There can be no doubt of the meaning, for it is explained in verse 15 to mean "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues." The phrase is quoted from Jer. li. 13. The Beast (xiii. 1) rises from the sea; the Harlot sits on many waters. There may also be an allusion to the sea trade which is the means of the wealth of great cities.

2 With whom the kings of the earth committed fornication,
and they that dwell in the earth were made drunken with
the wine of her fornication.
3 And he carried me away in the spirit into a wilderness:
and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-
coloured beast, [1]full of names of blasphemy,
having seven heads and ten horns.
4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and
[2]decked with gold and precious stone and pearls,
having in her hand a golden cup full of abomina-
tions, [3]even the unclean things of her fornication.

1 Or *names full of blasphemy.*

2 Gr. *gilded.*
3 Or *and of the unclean things.*

2. "*The kings of the earth committed fornication.*"—Nahum iii. 4. See also xiv. 8 and notes. In order to share her wealth the kings of the earth are ready to sacrifice honour and even God. Cp. Ezek. xvi. 15, where Jerusalem is accused of the same crime. In the days of the Empire the eager supply of means for vice to Rome by every subject country supplied the Christians of St. John's time with an illustration.

"*They that dwell on the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication.*"—In these words is described the mad rush for the wealth which is to be gained by following the lead of the great city. Our Lord uses the same metaphor. St. Luke xxi. 34. "Take heed to yourselves lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life and that day come on you suddenly as a snare." Cp. xiv. 8 and note.

3. "*He carried me away in the spirit into a wilderness.*"—Ezekiel (viii. 3) had a similar experience. All through the description we shall see that the Harlot City is a parody of the Church, the Bride of Christ. As the woman was nourished in the wilderness (xii. 14) so the Harlot is found there too. Both the Church of God and the City of Satan are in the wilderness of the sinful world. The one is nourished by God, the other plays the harlot there. Here is the spirit of those who make this world their home and say "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die." (St. James iv. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 32).

"*A woman sitting on a scarlet coloured beast.*"—The woman is enthroned on the power of Antichrist, for there can be no doubt of the identification of this Beast with that of chapter xiii. Just as the gods of the heathen have each their steed, which is worshipped with the rider, so this woman sits on the Beast who is the idol of the world. The Beast is now represented as scarlet coloured. He shares the harlot-like splendour of the woman. A scarlet purple was the colour used by the nobles of Rome (St. Matt. xxvii. 28). In mockery they clothed Christ with this symbol of earthly dominion.

"*Full of names of blasphemy.*"—See xiii. 5, 6 and notes.

"*Seven heads and ten horns.*"—See xii. 3; xiii. 1 and xvii. 9 and following, with notes.

4. "*The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls.*"—She is dressed as a harlot, even to the extent of gilding her person, for this is the literal meaning of "decked

And upon her forehead a name written, [1]MYSTERY, BABY- 5
LON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE
HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS
OF THE EARTH.

[1] Or *a mystery, BABYLON THE GREAT.*

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, 6

with gold." The extravagances of Poppaea, Nero's mistress, were known throughout the whole Empire and the Apostle may have had these in mind here.

The wicked display of wealth and extravagance of great cities is shown in its true light as the adornment of a harlot.

"*A golden cup full of abominations.*"—xiv. 8 and note. Jer. li. 7. Splendour and wealth outside, but inside abomination. St. Matt. xxiii. 25-28. The world gilds its vice with a display of splendour and wealth and art, but this is only the outside of gold, the inside is still abomination. The abominations are the idolatry and the vice of the city which is represented by the woman.

5. "*Upon her forehead a name written.*"—As in Rome the harlots used to stand with their names written on cards, so the harlot city has her name inscribed on her forehead. There is perhaps an allusion to the inscribing of the name of the Beast on their foreheads by his followers (xiii. 16.)

"*Babylon.*"—The name which the woman bears is the name of the city which ruled over the greatest empire of the world for centuries. It is the beginning of the world's kingdoms (Gen. x. 10). Till the time of Nebuchadnezzar it shared the dominion of the east with Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and after that, was supreme city in the Chaldean, Medo-Persian and Greek dominions of the east. Later on Rome took its glory and carried on its traditions faithfully. The name is therefore symbolical of the great city which, as a harlot, presides over the dominion of the world. The Babylon of St. John's time was Rome, but we are not to look for Babylon in one city or in one country. The name stands for a type of city which is found everywhere. In some cities this spirit is more, in some less, but London or Paris or New York or Bombay or Calcutta or many another city could show something of the characteristics of Babylon and of the worldly spirit it typifies.

"*Mystery.*"—See Introduction "Antichrist" and i. 20 note. There is some doubt as to whether Mystery is a name of Babylon or the description of the title. If the former, it refers to "the deep things of Satan" which she invites the world to pry into (ii. 24) and to the Mystery of Lawlessness (2 Thess. ii. 7) and is another parody of the revelation of God to His Church (1 Tim. iii. 16). If the latter, it is parallel to i. 20 "The Mystery of the seven golden candlesticks."

"*The Mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth.*"—Many another city copies the deeds of Babylon and shares her spirit and gives her the title of metropolis, mother city. If the people of God are His children, the people of the world are the children of Babylon. The abomination of desolation had overthrown the earthly Jerusalem (St. Matt. xxiv. 15) and the Mother of Abominations was ready to war against the heavenly Jerusalem.

6. "*I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints.*"—xvi. 6, vi. 9, xiii. 7 and notes.

and with the blood of the [1]martyrs of Jesus.
And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder.

[1] Or *witnesses*.

7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou wonder?
I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast
that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten
horns.

8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to
come up out of the abyss, and [2]to go into per-
dition. And they that dwell on the earth shall

[2] Some ancient authorities read *and he goeth*.

"*The martyrs of Jesus.*"—The persecution of Nero and provincial outbursts of animosity had already supplied martyrs for the name of Jesus. The Babylons of the different generations have shed the blood of many who have given their lives because of their faith in Jesus.

7—18. THE MYSTERY OF THE WOMAN AND THE BEAST EXPLAINED.

The Angel seeing the wonder of the Apostle, explains the vision; the Beast was and is not, and is to come out of the abyss and to go to perdition. All the world will wonder at him. The seven heads are seven mountains and also represent seven kings (or kingdoms) of whom five are fallen and one is and one is not yet come and there is also an eighth, the Beast himself. There are also ten kings, the ten horns who will receive power for an hour with the Beast. They will war against the Lamb and will be overcome. The waters under the harlot are peoples. The ten horns are to fight against her and destroy her and to give her kingdom to the Beast. The harlot is the great city which ruleth over the kings of the earth.

8. "*The beast that thou sawest was and is not, and is about to come out of the abyss.*"—This is the way in which the Antichrist counterfeits the titles of God and of Christ (i. 4). 'He which is and which was and which is to come' (i. 18, 19). I am .. the Living One and I was dead and behold I am alive for evermore. It should be noted however that the word for "is about to come" differs from that used in i. 4. It means here 'is about to appear or be present.' The exact meaning of the claim depends upon the interpretation of the seven heads. See xiii. 2, 3, and xvii. 9, 10, and notes on both passages. In chap. xiii. we saw that many of the features of Daniel's visions of empires were recalled and while it may well be that the successive re-appearances of the same features of opposition and cruelty are not wholly left out of sight here, we shall also see a local and transitory application of it for the Church of St. John's time in the reign of Domitian, who came in the spirit and cruelty of Nero and was called Nero Redivivus.

"*They that dwell on the earth shall wonder.*"—As the Church believes on Christ, so the world wonders at "the resurrection" of the Beast. What the world worships is power in any form and when it sees the wonderful strength of the Beast which defies apparent destruction it says, "Who is like unto the Beast, who is able to make war with him?" (xiii. 4). He is, however, to go into perdition. His strength will avail nothing against the might of the Lamb of God.

wonder, *they* whose name hath not been written [1] in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and [2] shall come.

1 Gr. *on.*
2 Gr. *shall be present.*

Here is the [3] mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are 9
seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth:

3 Or *meaning.*

"*Whose name hath not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world*"—xiii. 8, and note. The phrase "from the foundation of the world" appears to connect the book of life with the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world; it is called the Lamb's book of life (xxi. 27). To those who are in Christ there is a predestination to life, which is not shared by those who are not in Him. This does not mean that all who have never heard the name of Christ are doomed to perish. St. John teaches that the Son of God alone is the source of light and that He lighteneth every man who cometh into the world (St. John i. 9). Whether by creation or by conscience or by revelation or by the Incarnation or by the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Son of God is alone the Word and Revealer of God. To every man has come light from Christ in one form or another, and according to that light Christ judges every man and gives to every man according to his works. From him who had received but two talents only two were demanded; the man who had received but one was not condemned because he had received only one, but because he had not used even that one (cp. St. Luke xii. 47, 48). There are countless multitudes on earth who have not heard the name of Christ, but yet are His true followers, and Christ in the Day of Judgment will recognize their service and place them upon His right hand (St. Math. xxv. 31-46).

9. "*The mind that hath wisdom.*"—See xiii. 18. As there, so here it seems that the Apostle at this point makes a special historical application of the vision for the Church of his day.

"*Seven mountains.*"—His application begins with Rome, for there is no doubt that the seven hills must refer to Rome itself. This title was a common-place of poetry and it seems intended to give the clue to the reader who had "a mind that hath wisdom."

"*And they are seven kings.*"—Continuing the local application, the seven kings pointed to here would seem to be the kings of Rome. We have undoubtedly had recollections of the dominions of Daniel in chap. xiii. and it is possible that the Seer returns to them later in this chapter but the thoughts of the Christians would naturally turn in the first century to those Emperors from whom they suffered so much. The direct succession of Emperors, discarding usurpers who reigned for less than six months, was as follows;—Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero (the fifth), Vespasian, Titus, Domitian (the eighth). If these familiar names of Emperors are intended, then Domitian is the eighth. His likeness to Nero accounts in this case for his being said to be "of the seven." The story was current all over the East that Nero was to return, and the Christians in the early centuries called Domitian Nero, as also did non-Christian writers. He certainly carried on faithfully the traditions of Nero, being not less cruel, and persecuting the Church even more

10 And [1] they are seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while.

[1] Or *there are.*

11 And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition.

12 And the ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour.

Those who take this local interpretation point also to the fact that Titus the seventh Emperor only reigned for one year, as agreeing with the statement about the seventh that "when he cometh he must continue a short space." But the difficulty which has never been explained completely is that the vision is then apparently dated during the reign of the sixth king Vespasian and not in the reign of Domitian (to which the Revelation is generally assigned). Various reasons to account for this have been suggested. It may be that the whole of the Revelation was not given at one time and that this vision is earlier than the rest; or it may be that, as is not uncommon in Apocalyptic writings, the writer presents points of view of varying dates; or perhaps the division in the series is made to separate Nero the fifth, the inaugurator of the persecution of Christians, from the rest of the list and to compare him with the eighth Domitian who acted in the spirit of Nero. But probably we have to acknowledge that the meaning of the seven kings and of the eighth is not entirely cleared up. If we take them as world Empires (like those of Daniel) and make the Roman Empire the sixth, we are still at a loss to identify the shortlived seventh empire.

11. "*The beast that was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is of the seven.*"—This eighth king is made to gather up in himself all the characteristics of the Antichrist, as we have seen then in chap. xiii. While we may well believe that to the Christians of St. John's day Domitian represented the incarnation of the spirit of Antichrist, the vision is not confined to the one king, and now looks beyond the nearly local application, to the power of Antichrist, matched against the Church.

12. "*Ten horns.*"—With the eighth beast we have passed from the local and immediate interpretation to the future, and the ten kings continue it. It is said that they have not yet received their power and we know of nothing in the reign of Domitian to which we can refer this prophecy. One thing is clear, viz., that the time of persecution is not to end immediately but that there is to be a vague and indefinite though strictly limited period (one hour) of added power for the harlot city and a larger union of forces of persecution against the saints. The union of the ten kings with the Beast, then, points, not to some alliance with Domitian but to the uprising of new powers in the spirit and power of Antichrist.

But these very forces in the long run will be the means of Babylon's destruction. They will turn and hate her. With regard to one fulfilment of this vision, Swete writes as follows, "St. John looks beyond the end of Domitian's reign to a future which he does not attempt to fix.

These have one mind, and they give their power and author- 13
ity unto the beast.

These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall 14
overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings;
and they *also shall overcome* that are with him, called and
chosen and faithful.

And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where 15
the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and
tongues.

And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these 16

He has a divine vision of the forces within the Empire taking shape under the leadership of many who, without the Imperial purple, would possess Imperial powers and would use them for the destruction of Rome. His forecast was verified by a long series of disasters."

"*One hour.*"—Symbolical of a short time. Cp. viii. 1 "half an hour." This final and intense manifestation of the powers of evil only lasts for a short time. "For the elect's sake the days are shortened."

13. "*These have one mind.*"—Their one purpose is opposition to Christ (Psalm ii. 1. 2).

14. "*The Lamb shall overcome them.*"—We seem to have reached the time of the end and the field of Har-Magedon (xvi. 16, xix. 15).

"*He is Lord of lords and King of kings.*"—Deut. x. 17, 1 Tim. vi. 15. Many kingdoms combine under the Beast, but the Lamb of God is Lord of all lords and King of all kings.

"*They.. that are with him, called, and chosen, and faithful.*"—Rom. viii. 29, 30. The call of Christ sounded through the world: those who obeyed it were chosen in Him; and those who were faithful in all their temptations "overcome" (ii. 25-26). "He that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works to the end, to him will I give authority over the nations." (St. Luke xix. 17). We see here again the patience and faith of the saints triumphant over the opposition of the world, xiv. 12 notes.

15. "*The waters ... where the harlot sitteth ... are peoples.*"—The harlot city is supported by the subject peoples. It was never so true as in the Roman Empire that the Imperial city depended for her existence on the foreign nations who were subject to her. If Egypt held back the regular supplies of corn, Rome starved, and so with many other things. It is still true that the great ruling cities of the world rest on peoples and nations for their support.

16. "*And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot.*"—The subject races rose against Rome and fresh invaders swept down on her and she was plundered and sacked. So it will be with the great Babylon, when the ten kings arise and give their power to the Beast.

History shows several instances when the world could no longer bear the wickedness, and luxury of some great city and swept it away. The Persian dominion fell before the Greeks under Alexander; Rome herself fell a prey to the barbarous hordes which swept down from the north; and later Turks overran Europe, and established their dominion there.

shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked,
and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire.
17 For God did put in their hearts to do his mind, and to
come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast,
until the words of God should be accomplished.
18 And the woman whom thou sawest is the
great city, which [1]reigneth over the kings of the
earth.

[1] Gr. *hath a kingdom.*

1 XVIII. After these things I saw another angel coming down
out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was
lightened with his glory.
2 And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is
Babylon the great, and is become a habitation
of [2]devils, and a [3]hold of every unclean spirit,
and a [4]hold of every unclean and hateful bird.

[2] Gr. *demons.*
[3] Or *prison.*

"*Make her desolate and naked.*"—Isaiah xlvii. 1-3; Ezek. xvi. 39-42.

"*Eat her flesh.*"—The metaphor fits well with the sack of a city and the plunder which is taken.

17. "*God did put in their hearts to do his will.*"—A chief lesson of the Revelation is that God rules the world and that the powers that be are ordained of God. (Rom. xiii. 1.) Habakkuk found it hard to understand that God could use a power like Chaldea for His work (Hab. i. 6-12) but he was taught this lesson, that God rules all the world (Hab. ii. 20), so God will use the kings who have sold themselves to the Beast to accomplish his will on Babylon.

XVIII. The Doom of the Harlot City.

1-3. Sentence is Pronounced on Babylon.

A glorious angel whose splendour brightens the earth descends and proclaims the doom of Babylon, because of her fornication and wantonness.

1. "*Another angel having great authority.*"—The doom pronounced in xiv. 8, is repeated and enhanced by this angel, who, to enable him to carry it out, has great authority.

2. "*Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great.*"—This sentence is repeated from xiv. 8, where it is quoted from Isaiah xxi. 9, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods are broken unto the ground."

"*A habitation of devils.*"—Jer. ix. 11. "I will make Jerusalem..a dwelling place of jackals" (Isaiah xiii. 21.) The prophets tell of the desolation of cities, and how wild animals haunt the ruins. Revelation fills fallen Babylon with devils. Contrast the only other place where this word for "habitation" is used in the New Testament namely Eph. ii. 22. "Ye also are builded together for an habitation of God."

Babylon is actually a heap of ruins to-day.

"*Unclean, and hateful bird.*"—The horrible vultures, and other birds which feed on carrion haunt the ruins of Babylon.

3 For[1] by [2]the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her [3]wantonness.

1 Some authorities read *of the wine—have drunk.*
2 Some ancient authorities omit *the wine of.*
3 Or *luxury.*

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues:

3. "*Wine of the wrath of her fornication.*"—xiv. 8-10, xvii. 4, and notes.

"*The kings of the earth.*"—Her vices, and her sins were shared by the rulers of the earth.

"*The merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness.*"—The luxury of the city made a demand for the goods of the merchants and they found a ready market and grew rich.

Wantonness. Cp. verse 7 and note; "insolent luxury" (Swete).

4-20. The Sorrow of Earth and the Joy of Heaven.

Another voice from heaven warns the people of God to come forth from Babylon for she is to receive double for all her sins. She had boasted that she was a queen, and no widow, but sorrow and plague are to overtake her. First the kings of the earth standing afar weep over her lost strength. Then the merchants enumerate the merchandise they used to bring to her for which they now have no market. Then the sailors and ship masters lament, for their trade is gone. Then God's people are bidden to rejoice because God has judged her.

4. "*Come forth my people out of her.*"—There are two ideas united in these and the many similar passages,—that of separation from the wickedness that is in the world, which should be the mark of Christians (who are in the world, but not of it): and that of escape from the place of captivity and danger. The first idea is paralleled in Is. lii. 11, and 2 Cor. vi. 17. "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing."

For the second we may compare Lot's flight from Sodom (Gen. xix. and also Jer. li. 6.)

"*Have no fellowship with her sins.*"—Eph. v. 11. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." Those who have the communion of the Spirit and the fellowship of saints have no fellowship with the sins of the world, though their light must shine among those with whom they dwell, guiding them to Jesus Christ. It was and is a very necessary caution for a church surrounded by heathenism.

"*Ye receive not of her plagues.*"—Mere profession of Christianity will not save from punishment. To call oneself a Christian or a Mohammedan or any other name will not save one from the just punishment of sin. If the Christian dwelling in the midst of uncleanness becomes partaker thereof, he will be also a partaker of the punishment that will surely come.

5 For her sins[1] have reached even unto heaven,
and God hath remembered her iniquities.
6 Render unto her even as she rendered, and double *unto her*
the double according to her works: in the cup which she
mingled, mingle unto her double.
7 How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed[2] wan-
ton, so much give her of torment and mourning:
for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am
no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning.
8 Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death, and
mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly
burned with fire; for strong is[3] the Lord God
which judged her.
9 And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and
lived [4]wantonly with her, shall weep and wail
over her, when they look upon the smoke of her
burning,
10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Woe,
woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! for in one hour
is thy judgment come.

1 Or *clave together.*

2 Or *luxurious.*

3 Some ancient authorities omit *the Lord.*

4 Or *luxuriously.*

5. "*Her sins have reached even unto heaven.*"—Jer. li. 9. "Her judgment reacheth unto heaven." The next sentence shows that the meaning is that her sins are so great that God can no longer delay the punishment.

"*Remembered her iniquities.*"—Cp. xvi. 19. God's covenant with man is that He "will no more remember their sins and their iniquities," but if man rejects the covenant, God remembers the sins (Heb. viii. 12.)

6. "*Render unto her even as she rendered.*"—This is God's law of retribution (St. Matt. vii. 1-2, Psalm cxxxvii. 8, Jer. l. 29.) It is not the blind law of fate or karma, but the just retribution of a just God.

"*Double unto her.*"—Isaiah xl. 2.

7. "*She glorified herself and waxed wanton.*"—See verse 3. Wantonness is the impatience of law and restraint which often accompanies prosperity (1 Tim. v. 11). "When they have begun to wax wanton against Christ."

"*I sit a queen and am no widow and shall in no wise see mourning.*"—Isaiah xlvii. 7-8. Contrast St. Matt. ix. 15, of the children of God.

8. "*In one day shall her plagues come.*"—The plagues shall come suddenly in one day and many plagues will be accumulated at one time, plague and mourning and famine. (Isaiah xlvii. 11).

"*She shall be utterly burned with fire.*"—xvii. 16.

"*Strong is the Lord of Hosts which judged her.*"—Babylon had been praised for her strength (verse 10), but the Lord is mightier.

9. "*The kings of the earth.*"—The lamentation of the kings is the first of the three lamentations. (Ezek. xxvi.16.) They had shared her sins and her luxury and with her had forgotten God in the pleasures of the world.

And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over 11
her, for no man buyeth their [1]merchandise
any more;

[1] Gr. *cargo.*

[2]Merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stone, and 12
pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk,
and scarlet; and all thyine wood, and every
vessel of ivory, and every vessel made of most
precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble;

[2] Gr. *cargo.*

And cinnamon, and [3]spice, and incense, and ointment, and 13
frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour,
and wheat, and cattle, and sheep; and *merchandise*
of horses and chariots and [4]slaves; and [5]souls
of men.

[3] Gr. *amomum.*
[4] Gr. *bodies.*
[5] Or *lives.*

And the fruits which thy soul lusted after are gone from 14
thee, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are

10. "*The merchants of the earth weep.*"—The merchants next come and mourn, for their livelihood is gone. (Nahum. iii. 16-17.) We may notice that the lamentations of the kings and the merchants over Babylon are simply based on selfishness: their own profit is gone and so they mourn.

11, 12, 13. "*Their merchandise.*"—The merchandise is classified under five heads. First jewels and precious metals. Second, cloth and silk. Third, beautiful vessels, and furniture of wood and stone, and metal. Fourth, spices and ointments and food. Fifth, animals and men. A similar list of the merchandise of Tyre appears in Ezek. xxvii. Many of these things came from the east, some from India. Rome laid the whole world under contribution for her lusts and pleasures.

12. *Thyine wood* is a kind of cypress.

13. *The chariots* are vehicles for travel, not for war. They were probably very like the ancient *rath* still used in some parts of India. The Greek word is closely allied (*rheda*).

"*Souls of men.*"—This refers to the traffic in slaves and the carelessness of life which characterized Rome. The number of slaves in Rome far exceeded the number of freemen. The Romans were always in dread of a slave rising and were terribly cruel in consequence. For a trifling fault a slave might be put to fearful tortures, while his evidence could not be accepted in any court, and he might not hold any property, and his wife and family were the absolute chattels of his master. (Cp. Ezek. xxviii. 13). Again in the amphitheatres thousands of slaves were slain every year to make sport for the Romans and they were considered the natural source of supply for every vice.

14. "*Fruits which thy soul lusted after.*"—This may be understood literally of fruit, in which there has always been a great trade in both the ancient and modern world, or it may be metaphorical,—"the result of the labour which thou desirest." Just as her purposes were about to be achieved, Babylon fell.

"*All things that were dainty and sumptuous.*"—The descriptions of the

perished from thee, and *men* shall find them no more at all.
15 The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning;
16 Saying, Woe, woe, the great city, she that was arrayed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and [1] decked with gold and precious stone and pearl!
17 For in one hour so great riches is made desolate. And every shipmaster, and every one that saileth any whither, and mariners, and as many as [2] gain their living by sea,
18 Stood afar off, and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying, What *city* is like the great city?
19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein were made rich all that had their ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.
20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgment on her.

[1] Gr. *gilded.*

[2] Gr. *work the sea.*

Roman feasts during the time of St. John and of their wanton luxury and display are almost incredible.

16. "*Arrayed in..purple..and gilded.*"—Cp. xvii. 4, and note.

17. "*So great riches.*"—It is not for the stricken inhabitants that they mourn, but for the wealth. The grief of those who have made money their god, when they see a great destruction of it, is very real.

"*Every shipmaster, etc.*"—Shipowners and passengers and crews form a third company of mourners over the fallen city. Ezek. xxvii. 25.

18. "*What city is like.*"—Ezek. xxvii. 32; Rev. xiii. 4.

19. "*They cast dust on their heads.*"—Ezek. xxvii. 30. It was a usual sign of mourning.

20. "*Rejoice over her.*"—Chap. xii. 12; Deut. xxxii. 43; Jer. li. 48.

"*Ye saints, ye apostles, and ye prophets.*"—The whole Church founded on the apostles and prophets, with Christ, for the Chief Corner-stone, is to rejoice. Eph. ii. 20.

"*God hath judged your judgment on her.*"—Verse 6. As she had measured to them, so has she received. On Jerusalem was to fall all the blood of the prophets shed from the time of Abel to Zecharias, and on Babylon all the blood of the Church.

21—24. THE FINAL SENTENCE ON BABYLON.

Another strong angel taking a millstone, hurls it into the sea in symbolical pronouncement of the fate of Babylon, and describes the utter cessation of sounds both of work and of joy. The cause of the doom is her sorcery and her murder of prophets and saints and all that have been slain on the earth.

21 And [1]a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all.

1 Gr. *one.*

22 And the voice of harpers and minstrels and fluteplayers and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman,[2] of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in thee; and the voice of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

2 Some ancient authorities omit *of whatsoever craft.*

23 And the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the princes of the earth; for with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived.

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.

21. "*A stone, as it were a great millstone.*"—Jer. li. 63, 64. "And it shall be when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates; and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise again because of the evil that I will bring upon her; and they shall be weary." The action symbolizes the complete destruction and disappearance of Babylon.

22. "*The voice of harpers, etc.*"—Ezek. xxvi. 13. "And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard." Isaiah xiv. 11; xxiv. 8. Then as now music was an ordinary accompaniment of feasts and entertainments. In Babylon all this is done away. All the busy hum of life in the bazaars is hushed; and even the millstone is silent, for there are no more inhabitants of Babylon. Jer. xxv. 10. "Moreover I take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the candle."

23. "*The voice of the bridegroom.*"—Jer. xxxiii. 11. Though this means that all sound of festivity shall cease, at the same time it is impossible not to think of Christ the Bridegroom, of whose marriage with the Church we are to read in the next chapter. St. John iii. 29. By her wickedness Babylon has forfeited all right to Christ; when He comes it will be, not as the Bridegroom but as the Judge.

"*Thy merchants were the princes of the earth.*"—It was their luxury which had now come to an end. It is true now that the merchants of the great cities of the world are her princes.

"*Sorcery.*"—ix. 21, and note. Nahum iii. 4. We are not to limit the word here to witchcraft. "Fascination" is also meant, the luxurious vice which leads astray.

24. "*The blood of prophets and of saints.*"—See on verse 20. Wherever the world has its great metropolis there will be martyrdoms of pro-

1 XIX. After these things I heard as it were a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God:
2 For true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great harlot, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and he hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hands.
3 And a second time they [1] say, Hallelujah. And her smoke goeth up [2] for ever and ever.

[1] Gr. *have said.*
[2] Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

phets and of saints; and not only of these who die for religion but the blood of countless thousands who die, crushed by the weight of her luxury and heartless exactions. Rome destroyed thousands every year merely to provide amusement in her amphitheatres for an idle populace. But it is not an individual city which is here contemplated, it is the spirit of luxury and cruelty which haunts every great city of the world.

XIX. 1-10. The Bride of Christ.

In contrast to the harlot Babylon, who has met her destruction, the great multitude of the Church in heaven now appears singing a song of triumph over her fall. The song is answered by the elders and living creatures; and a voice proclaims from the throne, that all God's servants must praise him; the command is obeyed by the great multitude, who sing of the kingdom of God, and of His Bride, who is arrayed in fine linen. The angel pronounces the beatitude of those who share in the marriage supper and the Apostle is so carried away by the ecstacy, that he is ready to worship the angel, but is forbidden.

1. "*A great voice of a great multitude.*"—We have seen the destruction of the Harlot city; we are shown by contrast the Hosts of Heaven and the Church of Christ. As in vii and xiv we have the heavenly joy contrasted with the horror of evil on the earth. The multitude here is perhaps the angel host, that of verse 5 being certainly the Church.

"*Hallelujah.*"—'Praise Jehovah.' The fifth book of Psalms (cvii. —cl.) is full of Hallelujah psalms, and ends with one great song of praise in cl. The "Egyptian Hallel" was sung on Passover night and consisted of Psalms cxiii—cxviii. This was probably the hymn sung by Christ and His disciples, St. Matt. xxvi. 30. So when the fruit of Christ's atonement is seen, the Church again raises her Hallelujah song.

"*Salvation and glory and power.*"—vii. 10. By the destruction of Babylon He had wrought salvation and won glory and shown to the world His power.

2. "*True and righteous are his judgments.*"—xv. 3; xvi. 7, and notes.

"*He hath judged the great harlot.*"—vi. 9; xvi. 6, and notes. Those who "have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii. 16) cannot but rejoice when the harlot city which has defied His laws and persecuted His people is cast down.

"*Which did corrupt the earth.*"—xi. 18, and note. Christ died to give life to the earth; the Harlot corrupted it by her luxury, her cruelty, her idolatry, and her godlessness.

3. "*Her smoke goeth up for ever and ever.*"—Nineveh, Babylon, Tyrus, had fallen and other cities took their places. Rome rose more

And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures 4
fell down and worshipped God that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah.

And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, Give praise 5
to our God, all ye his servants, ye that fear him, the small and the great.

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and 6
as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth.

Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory 7
unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

And it was given unto her that she should array herself in 8

stately than ever from her ashes, in St. John's own life time; but now there is to be no rebuilding of Babylon. Her destruction is eternal, Gen. xix. 28; Isaiah xxxiv. 8, 9. We are to understand that never in God's kingdom can the luxury and wantonness, for which Babylon stands, find any place. The triumph of good will be complete.

4. "*The four and twenty elders, etc.*"—vii. 11.

"*Amen; Hallelujah.*"—Psalm cvi. 48. They assent to the song of praise of the Church and add their own Hallelujah.

5. "*A voice from the throne.*"—Probably the voice of the living creatures. They speak of "our God" and so they share in the allegiance of the saints.

"*Small and great.*"—There is no caste and no class before God; all are His servants; the classes in heaven are measured only by progress in holiness and work for God.

6. *Voice of a great multitude, ... the voice of many waters, ... of mighty thunders.* These phrases gather together the descriptions of the multitude in vii. 9; xiv. 2. The Harlot had sat on the waters of the world; the praise of heaven is like the roar of many waters. The praise which they give is not now for the destruction of Babylon, but for the kingdom of God.

"*The Lord our God, the Almighty reigneth.*"— xi. 15, and notes.

7. "*Let us rejoice and be glad.*"—St. Matt. v. 12; St. Luke xv. 32.

"*The marriage of the Lamb is come.*"—The presentation of the mystic union of Christ and the Church under the figure of a marriage runs through the prophets, Ps. xlv; Isaiah liv. 5. "Thy Maker is thy husband." lxi. 10; lxii. 5; Ezek. xvi. 8-14; Hosea i-iii. In the New Testament also it is common. St. Matt. ix. 15; xxii. 1-14; xxv. 1-13; Eph. v. 31-32.

"*His wife hath made herself ready.*"—The Bride has arrayed herself in her bridal dress and awaits the coming of the Bridegroom to take her to His home. The chief preparation is holiness. Cp. 2. Cor. xi. 2.

8. "*It was given unto her that she should array herself.*"—The gift of God is eternal life; but man has to strive to enter in at the strait gate.

fine linen, bright *and* pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are true words of God.

10 And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Both God's gift and man's effort are necessary for salvation. So the Church makes herself ready, but her bridal robe is a gift from God. St. Luke xii. 31, 32.

"*Fine linen.*"—iii. 4; vi. 11, and notes. Contrast the array of the Harlot, xvii. 4; Zeph. i. 8. "In the day of the Lord's sacrifice . . . I will punish . . . all such as are clothed with foreign apparel."

"*Righteous acts of the saints.*"—In xv. 4, the righteous acts of Christ were made manifest. Now the righteous acts of the Church, whose robes have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, are seen (vii. 14).

9. "*Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*"—They are the called, chosen and faithful, xvii. 14, St. Luke xiv. 15; St. Matt. xxii. 2. The seven beatitudes of Revelation are worthy of note—

i. 3. Those who read and hear the Book.
xiv. 13. The dead, which die in the Lord.
xvi. 15. He that watcheth and keepeth his garments.
xix. 9. Those that are bidden to the marriage supper.
xx. 6. He that hath part in the first resurrection.
xxii. 7. He that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.
xxii. 14. They that wash their robes that they may have a right to the tree of life and may enter in by the gates of the city.

"*These are true words of God.*"—The angel is probably referring to the things which he has himself shewn the prophet, and assuring him that all that he has seen (xvii-xix) concerning Babylon and the Bride of Christ shall certainly come to pass.

10. "*I fell down . . to worship.*"—St. John is so carried away by the wonder and glory of the revelation which has been made to him that he is ready to worship the angel who shewed it.

"*See thou do it not.*"—(See xxii. 8, 9.) On no account are the ministers of God to receive the worship which is due to God alone. Those who defend image worship and the worship of saints and of angels and of lower divinities, use many specious arguments in defence of their practices, but the prohibition of the angel is perfectly clear, and only God is to be worshipped.

"*I am a fellow servant.*"—St. Luke xx. 35, 36; Heb. i. 14.

"*That hold the testimony of Jesus . . the spirit of prophecy.*"—In xxii. 9 he substitutes for "them that hold the testimony of Jesus" the words "the prophets," for the spirit of prophecy is in itself the testimony of Jesus.

11 And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon, [1] called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

[1] Some ancient authorities omit *called*.

12 And his eyes *are* a flame of fire, and upon his head *are* many diadems; and he hath a name written, which no one knoweth but he himself.

Where the spirit of prophecy is, there will be a life of witness for Jesus; and, on the other hand, wherever we see a life witnessing for Jesus, we may recognize the spirit of prophecy. The angels who are ministers of God, are of the same company, for all work for God is the testimony of Jesus. St. John is reminded that the angel who shews him these mysteries of God is only a fellow servant in a communion to which he himself belongs, and that he cannot therefore be worshipped.

11-21. THE COMING OF THE WORD OF GOD.

Heaven is opened and the Word of God appears, followed by the hosts of heaven riding on white horses; His eyes are a flame of fire, His head is crowned with many crowns, His name no one knows; He is arrayed in a vesture dipped in blood and He is called the Word of God. From His mouth proceeds a sharp sword, and He will rule the nations with a rod of iron, and tread the winepress of God's wrath. On His garment is inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords. An angel summons all the birds to feast on the dead bodies of the slain; and the Beast and the False Prophet are cast alive into a lake of fire and brimstone and the rest are killed with the sword of the Word of God.

11. "*I saw heaven opened.*"—Ezek. i. 1; St. John i. 51. Heaven is opened in order that the Word of God and His hosts may be revealed.

"*A white horse.*"—vi. 2. While we do not identify the rider of vi. 2 with Christ, we may see in the coming of Christ as a Rider on a white horse in token of His victory, a reminiscence of the beginning of the victorious career of the Gospel, foreshadowed by the first seal.

"*Faithful and True.*"—Cp. i. 5; iii. 7, 14 and notes. The name is applicable here because He comes in fulfilment of all His prophecies and promises.

"*In righteousness doth he judge and make war.*"—This is, in Old Testament prophecy, the work of the Messiah. Isaiah xi. 4. "With righteousness shall he judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Cp. Psalm xlv. 3, 4, where the Warrior-Bridegroom is described.

12. "*His eyes.*"—Chap. i. 14; ii. 18, 23 and notes.

"*Many diadems.*"—The Beast was crowned with ten diadems in token of his dominion; Christ is crowned with many diadems, for "the kingdom of this world is become the Kingdom of Christ." xi. 15.

"*A name...which no one knoweth.*"—ii. 17 and note. St. Matt. xi. 27 "No one knoweth the Son, but the Father."

13 And he *is* arrayed in a garment [1]sprinkled with blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

[1] Some ancient authorities read *dipped in.*

14 And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white *and* pure.

15 And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth [2]the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.

[2] Gr. *winepress of the wine of the fierceness.*

16 And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

13. *A garment sprinkled with blood.*"—Isaiah lxiii. 1-6. "Their life-blood is sprinkled on my garments." But not only the blood of the enemies comes to our thoughts, but also the blood of the Lamb slain for man.

"*The Word of God.*"—St. John i. 1. This is the Personal Word of God. He has from the foundation of the world been the only Revealer of the Father. As the Revelation of God, He comes to take the kingdom and reign and to punish those who have rejected the messages of God. The truth about the Word of God has been felt after by men in many religions. The Mohammedans call Jesus the Word of God (Kalimatu'llah) but they deny His power and follow a prophet of their own. The Hindus speak of Brahmá shewing forth attributes and inhabiting the world, but the God whom he represents is described as without attributes and incapable of action.

The true Word of God is the Personal Son of the Personal Father, revealing God in all His perfections to men.

14. "*The armies.*"—xii. 7; St. Matt. xxvi. 53. The angels are sent at the last to execute judgment, St. Matt. xiii. 41.

"*Clothed in fine linen.*"—xv. 6, and note. Owing to the fact that in the Revelation the saints are represented as clothed in white linen, some have thought that the armies are the countless multitudes of redeemed. But the armies of heaven are primarily angels.

15. "*A sharp sword.*"—i. 16 and note. The Word of God has the sword of the Spirit, proceeding out of His mouth.

"*He should smite the nations.*"—Is. xi. 3 "He smites the nations not by judgments only, but by the forces which reduce them to the obedience of faith" (Swete).

"*He shall rule them with a rod of iron.*"—ii. 27; xii. 5, and notes. The work of the Pastor, the Guide and Ruler of souls (1 Pet. ii. 25), follows that of the Evangelist; the heathen are first to be brought to obedience and then under the discipline of Christ (Swete).

"*He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.*"—This connects the passage with the account of Christ's coming at the end of xiv. 19 (See notes.) The last stage of Christ's work is punishment of those who will not yield obedience to the sword and the rod.

16. "*King of Kings and Lord of Lords.*"—The Romans used sometim to inscribe on the thigh of their statues the title of the person

And I saw [1] an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with 17
a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid
heaven, Come *and* be gathered together unto the
great supper of God;

That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of [2]cap- 18
tains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh
of horses and of them that sit thereon, and the
flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small
and great.

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their 19
armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat
upon the horse, and against his army.

And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that 20
wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them
that had received the mark of the beast, and them that wor-
shipped his image: they twain were cast alive into the lake of
fire that burneth with brimstone;

1 Gr. *one.*

2 Or *military tribunes.* Gr. *chiliarchs,*

represented. The title of Jesus Christ (recalling the proclamation of the King at the end of xi.) is so inscribed on His garments. He has overcome the Antichrist and taken all the kingdoms of the world to Himself.

17. "*And I saw an angel standing in the sun.*"—The central station in the sky is taken up by the angel who has to make the proclamation to the birds. Cp. Ezek. xxxix. 17, where the same proclamation is made by the prophet after the battle with Gog. This battle is doubtless the battle of Har Magedon for which the evil spirits summon men in xvi. 13-16. Owing to the similarity between this description and that in Ezekiel, where the battle with Gog is described, some would also identify it with the battle described in xx. 8-10. But that takes place after the thousand years of the reign of Christ is over, and in it the slain are burned with fire, whereas here they are smitten with the sword. It is probable therefore that we are to understand two different battles in xix. and xx.

18. "*All men.*"—The Antichrist has gathered men of every class to war against the Lamb and all alike fall in the battle.

19. "*The beast and the Kings of the earth.*"—This is the final overthrow of the powers of the world. Ten Kings had given their power to the Beast and reigned with him, xvii. 12, 13. They are now involved in his destruction. Thus will be fulfilled the purposes of God, that man shall have dominion, in and through Jesus Christ, Who is Son of God and Son of Man.

20. "*The beast was taken and with him the false prophet.*"—With the power of the world falls the religious system which had sustained it. Both the Beast and his Prophet are utterly destroyed.

"*The lake of fire.*"—Dan vii. 11; Ezek. xxxviii. 22; St. Matt. xxv. 41. By it is symbolised the utter destruction of the forces of the world and of false religions which oppose themselves to Christ.

21 And the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, *even the sword* which came forth out of his mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

1 XX. And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain [1] in his hand.

[1] Gr. *upon.*

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,

21. "*The rest were killed with the sword of him..etc.*"—The leaders having been destroyed, the followers are slain by the sword which proceedeth from the mouth of Christ. (15 and notes). All are reduced to obedience or destroyed. The final cessation of all opposition to Christ is thus related.

"*The birds were filled.*"—The scene closes with the description of the usual sequel to a battle. We need not press the symbolism.

XX. 1-10. THE BINDING, LOOSING AND FINAL DESTRUCTION OF SATAN.

Satan is bound in the abyss for a thousand years; those who had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus and all those who had not worshipped the Beast rule with Christ for a thousand years, but the rest of the dead do not rise till the thousand years are fulfilled. The Blessing of those who have part in the first resurrection is pronounced. After the thousand years Satan is loosed and gathers the forces of Gog and Magog to war against the saints; but they are destroyed by fire and Satan is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.

1. "*And I saw.*"—The Beast and the False Prophet having received their punishment, an angel is sent to bind Satan. The vision of ch. xix. is apparently continued and the results of the battle are carried on.

"*Having the key of the abyss.*"—ix. 1, note. The abyss is the proper home of Satan and having been turned out of heaven (xii. 9) he is now removed from earth and only allowed his own sphere, the abyss.

2. "*The dragon, the old serpent.*"—xii. 3, 9, and notes.

"*Bound him for a thousand years.*"—St. Matt. xii. 29, 30. Christ the Stronger Man binds Satan the strong man and takes his goods from him. Thus is represented the triumph of the kingdom of Christ. We have seen the growing intensity of the struggle (xiv. 12, 13), and the partial triumphs of the saints, which now culminate in a reign of Christ and His people for a thousand years. The principle underlying this prophecy should first be considered. As we saw (xiv. 13) the works of the saints follow them even after death and seeming failure, just as the works of their Lord follow Him. As Satan concentrates his forces in ever gathering might against Christ, so at last the labour of the saints will also receive its great reward and they will reign in spirit with their Lord, while the resistance of the enemy will come to an end. The Jewish apocalyptic writings fixed definite though varying periods for the reign of Christ on the earth. The book of Enoch gives two 'weeks,' here we have a thousand years.

And cast him into the abyss, and shut *it*, and sealed *it* over 3
him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the
thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed
for a little while.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment 4
was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that had
been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of
God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image,
and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon
their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand
years.

In the early church a great controversy arose concerning the "millennium" or this thousand years. Some wished to take it literally, of a literal personal reign of Christ for a thousand years; and others idealized it. Thus Justin understood it of a literal thousand years' reign in Jerusalem, and Tertullian followed him. But even in Justin's time, Christians did not on the whole follow his view. Later, Augustine interpreted it of the victory of the Stronger Man over the strong man and saw in the reign of the saints the course of the Church, the kingdom of heaven in the world. The thousand years is perhaps best understood symbolically of a long earthly period in which the cause of Christ triumphs. If the dominions of Satan are ten (xvii. 12) and his persecution lasts for ten days, so the first reign of Christ before the end is a multiple of ten, i.e., not yet fully complete, but at the same time great and prolonged. The souls of the martyrs which had cried beneath the altar 'Lord, how long?' now share the first great triumph of Christ.

3. "*Cast him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him.*"—For a time the Christian forces in the world have unimpeded sway and Christian principles can be asserted without the penalty of martyrdom. The persecutions have borne fruit. The blood of the martyrs has become the seed of the Church and their protest against the worship of the Beast proves triumphant.

"*Deceive the nations no more.*"—xii. 9 the deceiver of the whole world.

"*After this he must be loosed for a little time.*"—When God's purposes have been fulfilled, and men prepared by the reign of Christ and His saints, Satan is again to be permitted to test them. "*Must*" refers to God's purpose, which He here reveals; there is no compulsion upon God to loose him. The period during which he will be free is, compared with the thousand years' reign, only a little while.

4. *I saw thrones, and they sat upon them and judgment was given unto them.*"—1 Cor. vi. 3, 4; St. Luke. xix. 17, 19; St. Matt. xix. 28; Dan. vii. 22. The saints are many times said to share the dominion of Christ. The picture presented to the mind is that of a state of society in which Christian opinion is dominant and positions of influence and authority are held by believers and not, as in the age of St. John, by pagans and persecutors (Swete).

"*The souls of them that had been beheaded....and such as worshipped not the beast.*"—All the martyrs and the confessors who have not

5 The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years
should be finished. This is the first resurrection.
6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrec-
tion: over these the second death hath no [1]power;
but they shall be priests of God and of Christ,
and shall reign with him [2]a thousand years.

1 Or *authority*.
2 Some ancient authorities read *the*.

worshipped the spirit of the world, share the dominion of Christ; vi. 9, 11; xiv. 13. Notice that it is the souls of the martyrs which live and reign with Christ. They no longer cry from beneath the altar, for their principles are now justified. They reign and rule in spirit.

"*The testimony of Jesus and the word of God.*—i. 2, 9; vi. 9-11, xiv. 13.

"*They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*"—St. John xi. 25. "He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." The Christ who suffered under Tiberius now lives (i. 18) and reigns: and His priesthood and kingdom are to be shared for a thousand years by the martyrs and confessors of the Church (Swete). So once again we have the patience and faith of the saints victorious in the end. The souls of the martyrs live in the results of their works (cp. xiv. 12, 13), in the triumphs they have won, and in their achievements which have made the world better and more in accordance with the purpose of God. The man who believes on Christ, and makes Christ's will his rule of life, can never die, for he is part of the working of God's eternal plan. A man who has not worked in that plan does not live in this way after death. The rest of the dead lived not again till the 1,000 years should be finished. Their works must be tested by the great judgment afterwards.

5. "*The rest of the dead lived not again.*"—The second resurrection was delayed till the "thousand years" were over. There are thus two resurrections represented; the first, the resurrection of the souls of the martyrs and of those who have not worshipped the Antichrist as explained above, and the second, the general resurrection of those who have not shared in the first resurrection, as described in verses 12 and 13.

6. "*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.*"—Only the choice spirits who have been the first to follow the Lamb through the fiery trial of martyrdom share in this first triumph. They now follow the Lamb in His victory and first Resurrection glory. Cp. 1 Cor. xv. 23. 'Christ the First-fruits, afterward them that are Christ's at His Coming' and Rev. xiv. 4 "first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb."

"*The second death.*"—As there are two resurrections, so there are two deaths. The first resurrection follows the natural death, which ends the life on earth. The second death is the lake of fire and brimstone (verse 14). Those who share in the first resurrection escape the second death. Those who rise in the second resurrection in which all the rest of the dead rise, are judged and according to the sentence of the judgment escape from or are condemned to the second death. The reign of Christ intervenes between the first and the second resurrections.

"*They shall be priests.*"—Herein the calling of Christians to a priesthood and kingdom is fulfilled. They share in both from Christ Himself. Cp. Rev. i. 6.

And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be 7
loosed out of his prison,

And shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in 8
the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them
together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of
the sea.

And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and 9
compassed the camp of the saints about, and
the beloved city: and fire came down [1]out of
heaven, and devoured them.

[1] Some ancient authorities insert *from God.*

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake 10
of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast
and the false prophet; and they shall be tor-
mented day and night [2]for ever and ever.

[2] Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

"*Priests of God and of Christ.*"—This is the only place where a priesthood of men to Christ is expressly mentioned, but throughout we have seen the Lamb worshipped as God.

7. "*And when the thousand years are finished.*"—There is a pause in the dominion of Christ during which Satan is allowed to test those who have enjoyed the rule of Christ without the temptations of Satan. After the general judgment the final reign of Christ in the new heavens and the new earth begins, to last for ever and ever.

8. "*And shall go forth to deceive the nations.*"—See xix. 17 and note. "*Gog and Magog.*"—Ezek. xxxviii. xxxix. The armies of the Scythians are there described and their destruction is prophesied. Gog is there called the chief prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal and Magog is the name of his land. The Jews appear in their traditions to have considered Gog and his land Magog to be two princes, the enemies of Christ, and this is the idea here. The Scythians overran Asia just before the time of Ezekiel. Tubal and Meshech are generally placed S. and S.-E. of the Black Sea. Here Gog and Magog seem to symbolize a great uprising of all nations against the dominion of Christ.

"*The number of them is as the sand of the sea.*"—Gen. xxii. 17: Josh. xi. 4 and many other passages where the same metaphor is used.

9. "*Over the breadth of the earth.*"—Thus the universality of the invasion is shewn.

"*The camp of the saints.*"—The Church represented as entrenched and ready to meet the foe.

"*The Beloved city.*"—The Church represented as Jerusalem. Gal. iv. 26; Heb. xii. 22. All these figures of the Church as an army, a Bride, a city, symbolize different aspects of the one Church of Christ which He has purchased with His own blood.

"*Fire came down out of heaven and devoured them.*"—So in Ezek. xxxviii. 22 Gog is destroyed by fire and brimstone. 2 Kings. i. 10, 11; St. Luke ix. 54.

10. "*The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.*"—Like the Beast and the False Prophet before him he is

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.

flung into the lake of fire: (xix. 20 note). "The forces, personal and impersonal, which have inspired mankind with false views of life and antagonism to God and to Christ will in the end be completely subjugated. From the lake of fire there is no release unless evil itself should ultimately be consumed" (Swete).

11-15. THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT WHITE THRONE.

The final judgment of the world now takes place. All the dead are summoned to stand before the great white throne, and the books are opened, and the book of life also, and the dead are judged out of these books. Both death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death, and any whose name is not written in the book of life is cast into the lake also.

11. "*A great white throne.*"—While the description reminds us of the magnificent ivory thrones used by Eastern monarchs, the colour here is doubtless meant to signify the justice and purity of the court. Dan. vii. 9.

"*Him that sat upon it.*"—The Apostle does not describe the Judge Who sits on the throne. He who sits upon the throne is in Revelation the Father, God Almighty. The Son has received authority to judge (St. John v. 27), but He does all in accordance with the will of the Father (St. John v. 30). The Judgment is, however, described in St. Matt. xxv. 31-46, and there the Son of Man is the Judge. The three parables of St. Matt. xxv. are worthy of attention, as representing stages in the judgment. The parable of the ten virgins describes the ready and unready in the Church when Christ first appears. The parable of the talents describes the rewarding or punishing of those who have received a charge from their Lord and have fulfilled or neglected it. The judgment of "the sheep and the goats" is the general judgment of the dead, "the great and the small" here described. We thus learn the principle of the judgment. All who have acted in a Christlike manner, though they may not have had an opportunity of hearing of Him (St. Matt. xxv. 37-39), will be saved through Christ (S. Matt. xxv. 40), and those who have not so acted will not be saved. (44—46).

"*The earth and the heaven fled away.*"—The Bible teaches that the world is not eternal, neither without beginning nor without end. Ps. cii. 26, 27; Isaiah li. 6; St. Mark xiii. 31; 2 Pet. iii. 10.

12. "*The dead, the great and the small.*"—Where true justice is, the great and the small are all equal in the judgment. All alike will stand before God. (Rom. xiv. 10).

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death[1] 13
and Hades gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This 14
is the second death, *even* the lake of fire.

And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was 15
cast into the lake of fire.

XXI. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the[1]
first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more.

"*Books were opened.*"—St. John v. 28-29; Dan. vii. 10; xii. 1, 2. This metaphor describes the manner of the judgment. Everything which man has done shall be made manifest. We have already alluded to the two recording angels, who were believed to contend before God for men. (xii. 10). Cp. St. Matt. xii. 36; 1 Cor. iii. 14, 15; iv. 4, 5. Augustine explains it to mean that all will remember all their actions and their consciences will acknowledge them right or wrong.

"*The book of life.*"—See xiii. 8 and notes.

13. "*Death and Hades.*"—All the dead are included. Those who had perished at sea are mentioned appropriately, for St. John was on a tiny island and the sea is constantly in his thoughts throughout this book; moreover there were many superstitions in those days regarding the fate of those who died at sea which needed correction. Death and Hades appeared in vi. 8, as carrying on their work; now Death itself is destroyed.

14. "*Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire.*"—Death is now no more needed and both it and the place of departed spirits where they await the final consummation are destroyed for ever. This is the last of Christ's conquests; nothing more of His redeeming work remains to be done. 1 Cor. xv. 26; Isaiah xxv. 8.

15. "*If any one was not found written in the book of life, etc.*"—St. Mark ix. 43-50; St. Matt. xxv. 41. Those who have identified themselves with Satan and with Antichrist share their doom. Not to win eternal life is to share eternal death. Dan. xii. 2; St. John v. 29.

This is the end of the present age. There follows in the two last chapters a description of the New Heavon and the New Earth.

XXI. 1-8. THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH.

The Apostle now sees the new heaven and the new earth, which replace the former; and there is no more sea. The New Jerusalem appears in her bridal attire, and it is proclaimed that God has now made His tabernacle with men and will dwell with them, Emmanuel, God with us, and will be their God, and shall wipe away all tears. Death is no more, nor sorrow. God Himself proclaims that He makes all things new, with solemn affirmations of His truth and unchangeableness. All who thirst may come for the water of life, and they who overcome shall inherit all things, but those who are unworthy or have had any traffic with the vices of the world are to be cast into the second death, the lake of fire.

1. "*A new heaven and a new earth.*"—Isaiah lxv. 17. "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be

2 And I saw the [1]holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall [2]dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, [3]*and be* their God:

1. Or *the holy city Jerusalem coming down new out of heaven.*

2 Gr. *tabernacle.*

3 Some ancient authorities omit *and be their God.*

remembered nor come into mind." St. Matt. xix. 28. "The regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of his glory." Acts iii. 21. "The times of restoration of all things." Rom. viii. 21. "The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the kingdom of God." 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any man is in Christ he is a new creature—the old things are passed away; behold they are become new." Death and Hades, Antichrist and the Devil have been cast into the lake of fire and at last all things have reached the state in which God purposed that they should remain, but which has been temporarily obscured by the entrance of sin into the world. There is no need to indulge in fanciful imaginations concerning the new heavens and the new earth. The chief thing on which to dwell is the removal of all trace of sin. Conceptions of sensual delights in Paradise, are in this chapter expressly excluded (xx. 9. xxi. 15).

The New Heaven and the New Earth are the Scripture expression for the suitable dwelling place of the New Man.

"*The first heaven and the first earth are passed away.*"—xx. 11 and notes.

"*The sea is no more.*"—In the Jewish Apocalyptic books there were several accounts of the burning up of the sea in the destruction of the old earth; but probably the idea is that this barrier, made by God, to separate countries and nations is now no longer needed when all are become one in Christ Jesus. There is a touch of pathos in the picture for St. John himself was separated from all he loved by this very barrier of the sea, which should then be done away.

2. "*I saw the Holy city, new Jerusalem.*"—Heb. xii. 22; Rev. iii. 12; Gal. iv. 26; Phil. iii. 20. The Church, the Bride of Christ, is described as a city; the holy city, purified from all sin and meet for her Lord.

"*Coming down out of heaven.*"—What is primarily intended is doubtless the heavenly origin of the Church and its Divine Mission (Swete.) St. James i. 17. If even now the Church is seen to be heavenly in its origin, much more will this be so when it is revealed in all its glory.

"*A bride adorned for her husband.*"—xix. 7-8 and notes. For the meaning of the symbol, see 1 Pet. iii. 4.

3. "*The tabernacle of God is with men.*"—vii. 15, St. John, i. 14. As the Word of God Incarnate dwelt with sinful men, so God now makes His tabernacle with redeemed men in the new earth. The one sacrifice of Christ has for ever purified men and enabled them to dwell with God.

"*They shall be his peoples.*"—Lev. xxvi. 11-12. "I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." Jer. xxxi. 33;

And he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and 4
death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor
crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away.

And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, 5
I make all things new. And he saith, [1] Write: *These words are faithful and true.*
for these words are faithful and true.

And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the 6
Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will
give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of
life freely.

[1] Or *write*,

Ezek. xxxvii. 27; 2 Cor. vi. 18; Heb. viii. 10. This is the fulfilment of the covenant which God made with his chosen people Israel and renewed by the prophets and apostles to His Church. It implies a likeness to God, by which man can dwell with Him. The plural "peoples" is an enlargement of the original scope of the covenant which was with the one people Israel. Now many peoples are included. Hos. i. 10.

"*God himself shall be with them.*"—A fulfilment of Isaiah vii. 14. "Immanuel, God with us." St. Matt. i. 23.

4. "*He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.*"—Death has been destroyed (xx. 14) and sorrow is no more. Isaiah xxv. 8; xxxv. 10; Rev. vii. 17 and notes.

"*Death..mourning...crying..pain.*"—All these things are wrapped up with sin and Satan. When sin is no more and Satan has been cast into the lake of fire, they will cease to be. They are necessary for man's discipline now, and they are real, but when their work is done they will be destroyed.

"*The first things are passed away.*"—xx. 11, xxi. 1, Is. xliii. 18.

5. "*Behold I make all things new.*"—This proclamation is made by God the Father. 1 Cor. xv. 28. He is the source of all Creation working at all times through the Son; He now renews His work of Creation or Regeneration on a still more glorious scale.

"*Write: for these words are faithful and true.*"—This proclamation is so important and so glorious that a special injunction is given to the Apostle to record it. Besides the general commands to write, which occur in the first chapter (twice) and in the second and third chapters (seven times) there are only three *special* sayings about which it is thus commanded that they shall be recorded.

xiv. 13. Write, Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord from henceforth.

xix. 9. Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

xxi. 5. Behold I make all things new. Write: for these words are faithful and true.

"*Faithful and true.*"—xix. 11; xxii. 6. "They answer to the realities which will in due time enter into the experience of life" (Swete).

6. "*They are come to pass.*"—These words are, of course, to be understood of the time of which God is speaking and not of the time of the writing of Revelation. When the new heaven and earth shall be revealed, then it will be true, that they are come to pass.

7 He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

8 But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars, their part *shall be* in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

"*I am the Alpha and the Omega.*"—i. 8 and notes. The name is appropriate here for as He had begun the work, so had He brought it to a completion. Rom xi. 36; Eph. iv. 6. "The Infinite life originates, embraces and transcends the Universe." (Swete).

"*I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of water of life freely.*"—St. John iv. 10, 11, 14; vii. 37-39; Rev. vii. 17. This is a general invitation to men to come and share in the glory now revealed, by taking from Jesus Christ the water of life, that is by believing on Him (St. John vi. 35) and receiving the Spirit of God from Him (St. Luke xi. 13).

7. "*He that overcometh shall inherit these things.*"—He takes up the message to the seven Churches (ii. iii), and adds an eighth to the seven promises "to him that overcometh." He shall be the heir of all things (Rom. viii. 16-17.) "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him." By the death of Christ, if men share in these sufferings, they, as one family, enjoy the inheritance of God, freedom from death, the indwelling of God, sonship and the life of the Spirit of God. The name of this family is "The Lord our Righteousness." Jer. xxxiii. 16.

"*I will be his God and he shall be my son.*"—Likeness in character to Him who is the source of our being is sonship (St. John viii. 44) and men will be like Him (1 John iii. 1-2) and so His sons, in a higher sense than those whose sonship merely rests on the fact of their being created by Him, but not in the sense of the Sonship of Christ, Who is the Son from all eternity (2 Cor. vi. 18; Gal. iv. 7). This is the New Testament teaching concerning the sonship of individual believers. In the Old Testament (Psalm lxxxix. 27; 2 Sam. vii. 14, and Exod. iv. 22) we find only the nation or its representative called the son of God. God led His people step by step to see in the nation: in the nation's representative: in every believer the son of God.

8. "*But for the fearful.*"—The blessedness of the redeemed is now contrasted with the state of those who do not share it. The various classes and characters which do not partake in it are enumerated. They are closely connected with the preceding scenes in the book and the special temptations of the first century Christians. Over against those who counted not their lives unto the death and suffered martyrdom are the cowards, those who deserted the Christian cause when persecution came.

"*Unbelieving.*"—Over against the faithful and patient saints are the unbelieving and faithless who denied the faith when the test was put to them.

And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven 9
bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he
spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the
bride, the wife of the Lamb.

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great 10
and high, and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming
down out of heaven from God,

"*Abominable.*"—That is, persons who have indulged in abominable vices until they themselves have become abominable. Such vices were very rife in the Roman world as they are in some parts of India even now. They were also intimately connected with the idolatry in which Christians had to refuse at all costs to take part.

"*Murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolators.*"—See ix. 21 and notes.

"*All liars.*"—This does not only refer to those who tell falsehoods, but to all those who take part in systems which are not the truth. Christ is Himself the truth; Antichrist and Satan are the makers of lies.

We have such lists of sin in St. Mark vii. 21-23 ("All these evil things proceed from within and defile a man.") 1 Cor. vi. 9-10. "None shall inherit the kingdom of God," Eph. v. 5; Gal. v. 19-21.

"*Their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.*"—Under this figure is expressed the terrible truth that they will be excluded from the life of the new heaven and earth and be separate from God. This truth is far more awful than the horrors described in popular legends of the torments of hell, whether Christian, Mohammedan, or Hindu.

XXI. 9—XXII. 5. THE NEW JERUSALEM.

"*The Apostle is now invited to see more closely the beauties of the New Jerusalem. From a high mountain he sees the city descending from God, her light like precious stone, her wall great and high, with twelve gates, inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes; and twelve foundations inscribed with the names of the twelve Apostles. The measurements of the city are taken and are found to be most symmetrical, and exceeding great. The wall is of jasper, the city of pure clear gold, the foundations of different precious stones, the gates of one pearl each. The Almighty is Himself the Temple of the city, which is lightened by the glory of God, day and night. All the glory and honour of the nations is brought into it and nothing that defileth can enter. From the throne of God proceeds a river of the waters of life, and on its banks grows the tree of life, having twelve kinds of fruit and yielding its fruit every month, while its leaves are for healing also. There is no more curse, but God and His servants dwell together, and there is no more night.*"

9. "*One of the seven angels.*"—xvii. 1. As one of these angels had shewn the Harlot city to the Apostle, he now shews the Bride, the new Jerusalem.

10. "*He carried me away..to a mountain great and high.*"—Ezek. xl. 2; St. Matt. iv. 8. In this last passage is contrasted the vision of the kingdoms of the world which Satan shewed our Lord from a very high mountain.

11 Having the glory of God: her [1]light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal:

1 Gr. *luminary.*

12 Having a wall great and high; having twelve [2] gates, and at the [2] gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

2 Gr. *portals.*

13 On the east were three [2]gates; and on the north three [2]gates; and on the south three [2]gates; and on the west three [2]gates.

"*Coming down out of heaven from God.*"—While the punishment of her enemies was going on she had been preserved in the Presence of God. She now descends to earth.

11. "*Having the glory of God.*"—Isaiah lx. 1, 1 John iii. 1-2. What is promised to the individual there, is here fulfilled of the whole body. The Church is like her Lord.

"*Her light.*"—She shines as a star in the firmament; and the light is like the flashing of a precious stone. We must remember that the Revelation is a book of visions and symbols and there is no need to understand the glories of Jerusalem in a literal sense; we shall see that they are symbolical of the purity and perfection of the Church of God; moreover, the Apostle could only describe the glory of the new heaven and earth in language of the present order. He takes the purest symbols he can find,—precious gems, crystal, pearl,—but the truth far exceeds anything we can imagine. 1 Cor. ii. 9; St. Matthew v. 16, may give us the clue to the symbol.

"*Jasper stone.*"—iv. 3 notes.

"*Clear as crystal.*"—Purity and truth are symbolized.

12. "*A wall great and high.*"—The preserving care of God is here symbolized. Zech. ii. 5. Isaiah xxvi. 1. "Salvation shall he appoint for walls and bulwarks."

"*Twelve gates.*"—St. John x. 7. "I am the door of the sheep." Here the gates are twelve, symbolical of the Church in its complete twelvefold aspect. (See vii. 4 and notes). The Heavenly City is named Jerusalem and it is appropriate that the number of the gates should agree with the number of the tribes. Ezek. xlviii. 31-35.

"*Twelve angels.*"—As watchmen. Isaiah lxii. 6. Psalm xci. 11. "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee."

"*Twelve tribes.*"—As in vii. the tribes of Israel represent the whole Church. We may note that Dan though omitted in vii. is included in Ezekiel where the twelve gates are mentioned by name.

13. The symmetrical arrangement of the gates corresponds with Ezekiel's description (xlviii. 31-35). No doubt symmetry is the first thought, but we may note that from every quarter of the globe, citizens may come to the New Jerusalem and they will find gates open before them.

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on 14
them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden 15
reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall
thereof.

And the city lieth foursquare, and the length thereof is as 16
great as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed,
twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the
height thereof are equal.

And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and 17
four cubits, *according to* the measure of a man, that is, of an
angel.

And the building of the wall thereof was jasper: and the 18
city was pure gold, like unto pure glass.

14. "*Twelve foundations.*"—The foundations of the city are the twelve Apostles of the Lamb..Eph. ii. 19, 20, 21. "Ye are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord." In St. Matt. xvi. 18 the confession of Peter is spoken of as the rock on which the church is built. It is not the individual apostles who are in view here so much as the foundation of teaching that they laid. So we need raise no questions as to the exclusion of Judas or the inclusion of St. Paul.

15. "*A golden reed to measure the city.*"—xi. 1 and notes. Cp. also Eph. iii. 18, 19. "To the end that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with the fulness of God." The measuring here is in order that the Church may know the beautiful symmetry of the New Jerusalem.

16. "*Foursquare.*"—Cp. Ezekiel xlv. 1, 2; xlviii. 20. This was the shape of the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple.

"*Twelve thousand furlongs.*"—The measurements of the city are multiples of twelve, the number of the tribes and of the Apostles, and we may call it the number of the organized Church in both Testaments.

The idea is that of perfect symmetry and the picture need not be pressed. The Church on earth is marred by men's imperfect conception of the whole truth; no such fault will be found in the New Jerusalem.

We need in India, as we begin to build the Church of the future, to take every care to keep the true proportions of the faith and avoid, as far as possible, the irregular, one-sided development of the past.

17. "*The wall..an hundred and forty and four cubits.*"—This probably represents the height, not the breadth of the wall. We are to understand the perfect security of the New Jerusalem. (Zech. ii. 5.)

The number is again a multiple of twelve.

"*A man, that is an angel.*"—The angel who measured appeared as a man in stature, and the measure of the cubit is a human measure.

19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, [1]sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald;

20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, [2]jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

21 And the twelve [3]gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several [3] gates was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold,[4] as it were transparent glass.

22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof.

1 Or *lapis lazuli.*

2 Or *sapphire.*

3 Gr. *portals.*

4 Or *transparent as glass.*

19. "*Precious stones.*"—Isaiah liv. 11, 12. "I will set thy stones in fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy pinnacles of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of pleasant stones." This is a picture of the peace which the Church is to enjoy after the tempests through which she passes in the world, and the same conception is apposite here, peace and transparent purity.

The list of the precious stones partly corresponds to the stones of the high priest's breastplate, Exod. xxviii. 17—20, but the order is different and four new stones are mentioned in Revelation. (Chalcedony, sardonyx, jacinth, chrysoprase.)

"*Jasper.*"—iv. 3 note. *Sapphire*, Exod. xxiv. 10, a blue stone. *Chalcedony* a green stone. *Emerald.* iv. 3 note.

20. *Sardonyx*, white streaked with red. *Sardius*, iv. 3 note. *Chrysolite*, yellow. *Beryl*, blue or green. *Topaz*, green. *Chrysoprase*, pale green. *Jacinth*, ix. 17 note, blue. *Amethyst*, blue. The various capacities of the workers in the kingdom are (so the Fathers thought) intended by the variety of jewels. Cp. 1 Cor. iii. 12. "If any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble."

21. "*Twelve pearls.*"—Isaiah liv. 12 quoted on 19. St. Matt. xiii. 45, 46. We may interpret the one pearl as Christ Himself, Who said "I am the door." St. John x. 7.

"*Street.*"—This is not a narrow gully but a broad road symbolizing perhaps "the broad thoroughfare of a perfect fellowship." (Swete.)

Like the whole city it is of pure gold (verse 18). St. John xiv. 6. "I am the way."

22. "*No temple.*"—From one point of view, the city is itself the temple. 2 Cor. vi. 16 "We are a temple of the living God."

"*The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple.*"—There is now unrestrained communion between God and man (i. 6 and notes) and no other temple is needed. Man lives always in the presence of God.

23 And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, [1]and the lamp thereof *is* the Lamb.

1 Or *and the Lamb, the lamp*

24 And the nations shall walk [2]amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it.

2 Or *by.*

25 And the [3]gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there):

3 Gr. *portals.*

26 And they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it:

27 And there shall in no wise enter into it anything [4]unclean, or he that [5]maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

4 Gr. *common.*
5 Or *doeth.*

23. "*No need of the sun.*"—St. John viii. 12. "I am the light of the world." Mal. iv. 2, Isaiah lx. 19.

"*The glory of God.*"—This looks back to the Shekinah, the light of God, which rested on the tabernacle and temple. xv. 8 and note.

"*The lamp thereof.*"—The Church, the Body of Christ, has been symbolized by lamps already. i. 20.

24. "*Nations shall walk in the light thereof.*"—This is another aspect of the multitude which no man could number. vii. 9. Cp. Isaiah lx. 3. Within the Church there is a place for every national characteristic, consecrated and harmonized in the one perfect communion of the saints.

"*The Kings of the earth do bring their glory into it.*"—The special treasures which each nation possesses, making up together the sum of the highest human ideals, are brought within the one Society of the Universal Church, whose gates are ever open to receive them. Japan, India and China in the East to-day are beginning to bring their glory within the Christian Church and to enrich the Christian life which had become almost wholly western in its development. This text is the answer to those who declare that Christianity is foreign and denationalizing. All national gifts are needed to make up the fulness of the Church, the Representative of Christ Himself. Even as Christ is the Son of Man, so the Church will finally include all the different aspects of humanity, expressed in all the different races of mankind, Cp. Eph. iv.

25. "*The gates.*"—Isaiah lx. 11. There is full and perfect freedom of access to good; only evil and impurity are kept out.

26. "*They shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations.*"—Isaiah lx. 5.

27. "*Anything unclean.*"—The uncleanness is not the dirt and filth so common in earthly cities but the moral uncleanness of sin (verse 9) Isaiah lii. 1. "Henceforth there shall no more come into thee the unclean."

"*Abomination and a lie.*"—xvii. 5. That which was the distinguishing mark of Babylon must not have any entrance into Jerusalem. That

1 XXII. And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of [1]the Lamb,

[1] Or *the Lamb. In the midst of the street thereof, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life.*

2 In the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was [2]the tree of life, bearing twelve [3]*manner of* fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

[2] Or, *a tree.*
[3] Or, *crops of fruit.*

3 And there shall be no [4]curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall do him service;

[4] Or *no more anything accursed.*

4 And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* on their foreheads.

greatest of all falsehoods, the worship of false gods, is probably chiefly in the Apostle's thought. Christ is Himself the Truth and no lie can dwell with Him.

XXII. 1. "*A river of water of life.*"—Ezek. xlvii. 1—12. The LXX calls the waters "the waters of forgiveness." They are there as here, the place where trees grow for the healing of the nations, Cp. also Gen. ii. 10—14, where the rivers which flow from Eden are described; vii. 17 and notes, Zech. xiv. 8. The Water of Life is the Holy Spirit. Cp. St. John vii. 37-39.

"*Proceeding out of the throne of God.*"—The Holy Spirit is sent forth from the Father and the Son.

2. "*The tree of life.*"—Ezek. xlvii. 12; Rev. ii. 7 and notes.

"*Twelve manner of fruits.*"—While it is a reference to the twelve months, during each one of which the tree yields fruit, the number twelve is appropriate to the measurements of the city, (xxi. 16 and notes). If the river is the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit may well be symbolized by the fruit of the tree of life (Gal. v. 22, 23.) St. John iv. 34, 35.

"*The leaves of the tree for the healing.*"—So Ezekiel. The nations are referred to in xxi. 24.

3. "*There shall be no curse any more.*"—The tree of life and the river have carried back our thoughts to Paradise, and the curse pronounced on Adam is now removed. Gen. iii. 16-19; Zech. xiv. 11.

"*The throne of God.*"—iv. 2, 3. The presence of God is blessing, separation from God is the curse. Paradise is now regained and mankind is again admitted into the closest fellowship with God: man stands outside no longer, for the curse is removed.

"*His servants shall do him service.*"—Psalm cxxiii. 2; cxxxiv. 1; Rev. vii. 15. God's servants stand ever before Him, ready to do Him service. The life of heaven will be a life of service. The word used for 'service' (see vii. 15) implies worship, especially the worship of a great congregation.

4. "*They shall see his face.*"—1 Cor. xiii. 12. Moses could not see God's face, but in heaven the veil will be removed. St. Matt. v. 8.

"*His name...on their foreheads.*"—iii. 12; vii. 3, and notes.

And there shall be night no more; and they need no light 5
of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God
shall give them light: and they shall reign [1]for
ever and ever.

[1] Gr. *unto the ages of the ages.*

And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: 6
and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his
angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly
come to pass.

And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth 7
the words of the prophecy of this book.

And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And 8
when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet
of the angel which showed me these things.

5. "*No night.*"—xxi. 25 and notes.
"*They shall reign for ever and ever.*"—i. 6 and notes, xx. 4 and notes.

XXII. 6-21. CLOSING WARNINGS.

An assurance of the truth of these sayings and a blessing for the man who keeps them is first given. Then St. John records the warning given by the angel, whom he wished to worship. He then records the words of Christ. He is not to seal up the words of the book, but men will go on in the path they have chosen, whether right or wrong. Christ comes quickly, with His reward. He is the unchangeable, so only those who wash their robes are blessed, while all who are unclean will be cast out of the city. He again assures us that this is the revelation of God, and a prayer that Christ may come is uttered by the Spirit and the Church. Nothing is to be added to or taken away from the words of this book. With a repetition of the warning of Christ's speedy Coming and a prayer that He may come soon, the last blessing is given.

6. "*These words are faithful and true.*"—An assurance is given to the Apostle that what he has seen is a reality. Whether it is to be considered wholly future or, as is the case with most visions of this book, partly for the present and partly for the future, is not stated, but of the ultimate truth there is no doubt; we have the most solemn assurance of that (xxi. 5 and note).

"*The Lord God of the spirits of the prophets.*"—As we have seen, the Book of Revelation gathers up the teaching of the prophets, and St. John throughout claims his place among them. It is the same Lord Who inspired them, Who has vouchsafed this Revelation also.

"*Things which must shortly come to pass.*"—i. 1 and notes.

7. "*Behold I come quickly.*"—ii. 16 and note, cp. also xxii. 20.

"*Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.*"—i. 3 and note. The book opened with a blessing on those who read and hear the words of the book; it closes with a blessing on those who keep its words. It is not enough simply to hear, St. James i. 23.

8. "*And I John am he that heard and saw these things.*"—In these words St. John adds his signature to the marvellous vision he has

9 And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them that keep the words of this book: worship God.

10 And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand.

11 He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness [1]still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy [1]still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness [1]still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy [1]still.

12 Behold, I come quickly; and my [2]reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is.

1 Or, *yet more.*

2 Or, *wages.*

written. Cp. St. John xxi. 24. We have thus the double testimony of the angel (6, 7) and of the Apostle.

"*When I heard and saw.*"—The Apostle was so overwhelmed at the vision of the New Jerusalem that he forgot the warning of the angel and again was ready to worship him; and again received the warning against giving reverence to any other than God. The warning is necessary at all times; both for the Christians who were constantly tempted to idolatry then and for those who are daily brought in contact with idolatry now. See xix. 10 notes.

9. "*Them which keep the words of this book.*"—This is a specialized form of the words of xix. 10, "that hold the testimony of Jesus."

10. "*Seal not up.*"—Contrast the command to Daniel (xii. 4) who was told to seal up the words of his prophecy till the time of the end There is no need for such a command to St. John, for the end is near. The injunction means that the vision is to be given to the Church and Christians are to study it (i. 3).

11. "*He that is unrighteous, etc.*"—Fixity of character is an important factor in human growth. It is one of the strongest arguments for a life to come. The Hindu philosophers saw this when they evolved the doctrine of karma, but they made the mistake (necessitated by their doctrine of Brahma and of Maya) of separating the character from the man. There is no such separation possible. He that is unrighteous, will find that a time will come when his unrighteousness will be crystallized into an unrighteous character, Isaiah vi. 10. On the other hand, there is comfort in the thought for believers. The struggle with sin will not last for ever; there will come a time (only fully, in the next world) when the struggle will be no longer necessary and the character will be fixed towards righteousness. Cp. Dan. xii. 10.

"*Filthy.*"—One who has immersed himself in the abominable vices common where Christ does not hold sway over men's hearts. There is perhaps no more clinging habit than the habit of lewd talk and act, (Eph. v. 3—5) and so this is specially included here.

"*Righteous..holy.*"—Primarily they are contrasted with "unrighteous" and "filthy." Righteousness is by faith in Christ, holiness is the gift of the Spirit; righteousness is individual, holiness specially connected with the corporate life of the Church.

12. "*Behold I come quickly.*"—The warning about fixity of character is emphasized by the fact that the time of reward and penalty will

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. 13

Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have [1]the right *to come* to the tree of life, and may enter in by the [2]gates into the city. 14

Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators and the murderers, and the idolators, and every one that loveth and [3]maketh a lie. 15

1 Or, *the authority over.*
2 Gr. *portals.*
3 Or, *doeth.*

shortly come. With regard to individual lives, Christ comes quickly and unexpectedly and they are called to their account; with regard to the whole Church, the time in which she can accomplish the great work which she has to do in the world is all too short, and men's characters are daily being fixed in the paths they have chosen. St. Luke xxi. 34—36.

"*My reward is with me.*"—Jer. xvii. 10; St. Matt. xxv. 14-30; St. Luke xix. 11-27 and many more such passages. The idea that every act receives its recompense is common to every religion; but the fact of the Dispenser of rewards being Christ Himself is worthy of attention. It is a Judge who dispenses; it is not simply a statement of the law of consequences.

13. "*I am Alpha and Omega.*"—The assertion of the unchangeableness and truth of Christ is appropriate to the idea of judgment; there is no respect of persons or weakness of purpose in His court. He began all things as the Word of God: He will finish all as the Judge. Cp. i. 8 and notes.

14. "*Blessed are they that wash their robes.*"—While there is no respect of persons in Christ's court there is pardon offered through His blood to every sinner. Cp. vii. 14 and notes. It is a beautiful thought that the last Beatitude of the Bible is for the penitent sinner, who washes his robes. He has a *right* to the tree of Life.

"*The tree of life.*"—ii. 7 and notes.

"*Enter by the gates into the city.*"—Cp. xxi. 12, 13, 27 and notes. The angel-guards of the gates will rigorously exclude any who have not, by washing their robes, acquired the right to enter. Zeph. i. 8; St. Matt. xxii. 1—17; Rev. iii. 5, 12.

15. "*Without are the dogs, etc.*"—xxi. 8, 27 and notes. The word is used in the Old Testament for those who do abominable deeds and are morally unclean: it is especially applied to those who commit sins of foul impurity. The well known sight of the dogs and jackals prowling around a town or village, feeding on garbage and devouring filth will explain the symbol.

"*The sorcerers..the fornicators..the murderers..the idolaters.*"—ix. 21, xxi. 8 and notes. "*Every one that loveth and maketh a lie*"..Every one who by any act supports any falsehood, as the False Prophet of the Beast does, xiii. 11-17, 2 Thess. ii. 10—12. In St. John's writings truth is righteousness and falsehood unrighteousness. St. John viii. 44 and 1 John ii. 4, 5. The phrase '*loveth* a lie' is one which carries with it an awful warning. Our characters may reach such a point, if we are not on

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things [1]for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

1 Gr. *over.*

17 [2]And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take of the water of life freely.

2 Or *both.*

our guard, that a lie is actually pleasant to us. If we reach this stage our whole nature is becoming false.

16. "*I Jesus have sent mine angel.*"—This is, so to speak, the seal of Christ to the truth of the Apostle's message; i. 1 and notes.

"*I am the root and the offspring of David*"—v. 5 and note. Christ the Lord of David (St. Matt. xxii. 41—46) is also his Son (St. Matt. i. 1), and gathers up in Himself all the promises made to David, as King of Israel. 2 Sam. vii; Psalm lxxxix; Isaiah xi; Ezek. xxxvii 24.

"*The bright, the morning star.*"—ii. 28 and notes. Num. xxiv. 17.

17. "*The Spirit and the Bride say Come.*"—In verse 12 Jesus says: "Behold I come quickly." Now the Spirit speaking through the prophets, who have the spirit of prophecy, says 'Come' and the Church, the Bride of Christ, echoes the great word 'Come.' The Spirit and the Bride are in this sense represented by the Christian Prophets and the Christian Saints (xvi. 6). The waiting, expecting, aspiring Church of the first age out of the midst of her sore affliction looks longingly for her Lord's return and cries, Thy kingdom come!

"*He that heareth, let him say Come.*"—Every individual who hears the cry of the Spirit and the Church is to add his petition, that Christ may come.

"*He that is athirst, let him come.*"—A universal call to all men who feel their soul's need unsatisfied, to come to Christ. St. John iv. 14; vi. 35. Or if a man is not thirsty in the sense of feeling a deep need, yet if he is willing, he may take of the water of life freely.

This, the last command in the New Testament, cannot but be of the greatest importance to all Christians. And the command is, in effect, that the Church shall preach the Gospel to those who know not Christ. The Spirit in the Church cries longingly for the Lord's return, but as He Himself has told us, He will not return till His Gospel has been preached to all nations. And how shall this be accomplished if His Church does not call those who are athirst to come? If the Church is really the Bride, and if the Spirit of Christ is really the Spirit of prophecy, then she must raise her voice with that of the Spirit both in prayer to Christ to return and also in preaching to men to come to the fountain of life. If we see a Church that is not pressing forward to carry the water of life to thirsting souls, then we may be sure that such a Church needs to repent and do the first works lest the Lord come quickly, not for reward, but for punishment, and remove her candlestick. What is true of the Church as a whole is also true of the individual. There is one sure test of our longing for Christ's return,—are we

18 I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add [1]unto them, God shall add [1]unto him the plagues which are written in this book:

1 Gr. *upon.*

19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, [2]which are written in this book.

2 Or, even from *the things which are written.*

20 He which testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus[3] be [4]with the saints. Amen.

3 Some ancient authorities add *Christ.*
4 Two ancient authorities read *with all.*

longing and thirsting to bring the water of life to others? If we are, then we can echo from our heart the prayer of the Spirit and the Bride, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

"*Freely.*"—Isaiah lv. 1; Rev. xxi. 6.

18. "*I testify.*"—Christ solemnly warns us against tampering with the Revelation. It is not the words, but the teaching and the spirit which are meant. No one who loves the Lord can deliberately add his own purposes and will to the purposes and will of God, nor, on the other hand, will he take away anything from those purposes. Deut. iv. 2. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you neither shall ye diminish from it." The penalty of adding is the laying upon the sinner the plagues of this book, for he will have taken his place with the world and with Antichrist; the penalty of diminishing is the removal of his part from the tree of life and the holy city, for he who does not desire to fulfil the conditions attached to entrance to the holy city and access to the tree of life, will lose his right to it. (xxii. 14, Eph. ii. 18).

20. "*Yea; I come quickly.*"—This is Christ's answer to the call of verse 17, as well as a repetition of the burden of the book. "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." (i. 1, 7; ii. 16; iii. 3, 11; xvi. 15).

"*Amen, Come Lord Jesus.*"—The Apostle answers for us all. Here is the last prayer of the whole Bible. It is a prayer which is a touchstone of our faith and hope and love. Do we use it constantly and sincerely? Is it the daily aspiration of our lives?

21. "*The grace of the Lord Jesus.*"—This is the ending of the letter to the Churches, 1 Cor. xvi, 23; 2 Cor. xiii, 14. Grace is the Divine favour, comprising cleansing from sin and sanctification through the Spirit. These are the conditions of entrance to the holy city; the Apostle prays that all the saints may share in them.

"*Saints.*"—All who are called to Christ and have enrolled themselves under His banner are called by the Apostles "saints." Eph. i. 1; Rev. viii. 3. We may surely believe that the Church in India, from the Himalayas to Ceylon, from Burma to the Frontier Province will claim her place among those who receive this final benediction, because they love the appearing of their Lord.

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